DEAR OLD TEMPLETON

by

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THE BLACK DROP
CHARLES LAMB. A PLAY.
CHILDREN OF EARTH
ELLEN PRIOR
THE FLYING TEUTON
HOMESPUN AND GOLD
LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY
THE MYSTERIES OF ANN
MY LOVE AND I
OLD CROW
ONE ACT PLAYS
THE ROAD TO CASTALY
THE SECRET OF THE CLAN
VANISHING POINTS

DEAR OLD TEMPLETON

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ALICE BROWN

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I

An amazing thing had happened in the editorial office of a New York leading magazine. The editor in chief who, as yet, was the only one to know it, was so fully aware of its quality that when it came upon him he had been unable to believe his ears, and he now sat, hands on the arms of his chair, in the attitude of one about to rise and assure himself, if that could be done. He was young for this chair of authority, but looked the jadedness of more than middle age, perhaps from the necessity of dodging undesirable contributors while he ministered to the modern idea of the "magazinable" by divining what the public really does want or, more precarious still, dangling before it what it might be made to try through fervid advertising. But the incident just over was too much for him. He had to tell somebody, and he pressed the button that summoned Maisie McGuire, his other editorial self. She appeared with a solicitous promptness and stood lightly poised in the attitude of the most admired fashion advertisements, awaiting orders and confidences alike. Artistically painted and bobbed to a point indicating a high degree of social life in magazine offices, she might have been Terpsichore waiting for the first note of fiddle or flute; but she was nothing of the sort. She

was, the editor would have been ready to tell you, equipped with an amazing astuteness, an appalling young energy when it came to piling up hours and electrifying authors she was sometimes sent out to recruit, into a determination to do or die. He looked at her now in what seemed a pathetic desire to be rescued from his amazement, or at least relieved of the burden by sharing it. (Let it be said here that his name does not matter. He was merely the Editor, or, on occasion, the Old Man.)

"Who do you think has been here?" he asked, in a tone which seemed to challenge her to deny the likelihood of anybody having the hardihood.

"I don't know," said she, adding hopefully, "Marley's ghost? Though he isn't due, not for ten whole weeks."

That was what he loved in her. She was young enough to make the office seethe with her energy and clever enough to know her Dickens and administer it when she found it helpful. She did not take the chair he indicated with his oblique nod suggesting a conference. She knew it was not a conference. It was only that the boy in him whimpered for her. He had to "come to mother."

"Old Templeton!" he said wonderingly. "Dear Old Templeton!"

This was a phrase of no rare occurrence, and her curiosity would have stopped there if the wonder in his tone had not beckoned her on.

"Same thing?" she prompted. "Another story?"

"I thought it was going to be," he answered, as if he were still savoring the queerness of it before passing

it on to her. "I had my mouth all made up to reminding him we still had one in the safe and the cheque going to him shortly, but I knew I should end by taking it. Knew it! Always do."

"Always," said she. "You can't help it. None of you can. It was a cold day for the magazines when he began to be Dear Old Templeton. You can't resist him, any of you. *I* could."

"No, you couldn't," said he, coming awake with a bounce in his chair. "It's you that say 'Oh, well,' when you read 'em and chuck 'em back at me, and I know what your 'Oh, well' means."

"Oh, well," she conceded, waiving her own softheartedness, "if it wasn't another story, what was it?"

"That's the point," said he. "Templeton's through. No more fiction, he says. Came to tell me. Spoke of his stories as if they were step-children. Got the idea they're mostly punk and isn't going to do any more. And"—he continued weightily, fixing her with the glance that bade her expect the real climax in reserve, "he not only said there wouldn't be any more but he asked for the one we'd taken, and I had it out of the safe and he carried it off in his green bag."

"Holy Moses!" said Terpsichore, and he knew she was moved indeed. She put her pencil to a too scarlet lip. "He did inherit a little money last year," she said reflectively. "Not more than thirty thousand. I had an idea that wife of his had blown it all in by this time, starting a magazine or something. How do you account for it?" she asked, like a specialist probing deeper tissues.

"I don't," said he. "But I'm too infernally glad to

care. He's been one of the biggest problems I've had to deal with since I came on here. There's something about him—oh, you know!"

"Dear Old Templeton," she said again with a confirming vagueness he understood.

"That's it," said he. "It's just as you say. All the fellows feel it. You can't put him off with a rejection slip without wishing to God you didn't have to. And it isn't as if he demanded anything. He doesn't. Sometimes I think it's that wife of his in the background. But you bet your bottom dollar he isn't Dear Old Templeton to her."

With this cryptic conclusion he turned to his desk and Terpsichore, understanding he had got it off his chest and practically refusing to feel the slightest access of weight on her own, returned to the unfinished letters whereby she hoped to snare one shy author for a certain job, and, with an equal skill, elude another.

Meantime, John Templeton, who was a commuter, was pursuing his way to the station, walking lightly and in such high spirits that he avoided traffic only through an absent-minded nimbleness, oblivious of the officer. He swung his green bag of manuscript with a practised hand, and could have tossed it up and caught it if he had allowed his feelings vent. Once Sally, his young daughter, had looked at the bag with disfavor when he came home carrying it in his untidy way, and had remarked scoffingly:

"I bet you couldn't get another bag like that if you offered a reward."

"I don't want another," Templeton had averred, with the unconcern he kept chiefly for his wife, because

he had to throw her off the track so often and he had found this the best way; and while Sally was blinking—and her blinks were not unbecoming—he escaped.

His bag? it was as much a part of him as the nipple is part of the baby who goes to sleep in the sun sucking it, the kind familiar feel of it, the nobbly protuberances within that spoke of literature and life. Despair, too: his futile scribbling had always imbued him with despair. His bag, indeed! What did she want him to carry? a brief case or something else square cornered to bump him in the legs?

Templeton was a distinguished figure striding along in the late afternoon among the crowd too absorbed in its own avoidance of disaster to look at him except as he cannoned into them: a well made man, with a brown, bright-eyed face and the smile that was always surprising and delighting you, it came so suddenly and seemed to establish so swift an understanding. And yet, though he had a nose and chin of good lines and distinctive size, there was something vulnerable about his face. Unless you were too obtuse to human values ever to feel those things, you knew he could be hurt tremendously. Something childlike in him, something dog-like and dumb? you didn't know. That was what made his worried editor hate to refuse his stories and caused more men than that one to fall into the habit of "Dear Old Templeton." He was not old in years, only in the ripe forties, at an apex when he might have seen his best work ahead and beckoning, if there was anything creative in him. But Templeton had about decided there was not, at least following the pattern he used. He had a boy's light walk, as if he were going

as fast as possible to some delightful and perhaps forbidden end, and he was thinking, as he strode along, that he hardly knew why he had sought his editor so impetuously and proposed their speedy parting. The idea had come to him perhaps a week ago, a late afternoon when he looked up from his desk in the office of the twelfth story where he earned his salary doing his column and varied deviling for the literary journal that was now the mouthpiece for modern fiction, and saw the sun red through the city smoke. He had seen it so a million times, but now it struck his eyes as an amazing splendor, and chiefly a signal, a blazon of the splendors all over the world where he was not. And in that moment he made up his mind that he had never lived and might, even against reason, live now. He was not going to run away. That was the crude form of it. Men did it when they had worn one set of nerves to tatters—that might not be scientific but it was what it seemed to him runaway men did, the most of them; or they packed a grip, stole a handful of securities if they had access to them, or drew out their own modest pile and skipped, and were seen no more until gout or the sense of home came over them and they slunk back again with a convenient amnesia label tacked on their mental luggage. He wouldn't do that. He would be free, but free standing in his tracks letting the wave of modern mediocrity beat upon him and overwhelm him if it liked. He wouldn't run. That sense of awakening brought him by the red sun through the city smoke had been more than the reproach of an inept literary career. It was a sharp conviction of being surrounded by a magic, a mystery, which is for all men,

if they will it, and which few men even guess at. It accounted for his low state of mind. He was not greatly concerned over the chaotic conditions of life following the war. He hated them. He deplored their effect on his own profession of letters, exalting the valleys and bringing the mountains low. But what need that be to him if he kept his intimacy with a universe all compact of spiritual magic hardly yet explored, as the wonders of science lie hidden in the womb of night until their time is accomplished and they are delivered?

All this, which is so vague in the writing, was even more indefinite in his mind; but it moved him tremendously, as a man is moved by the possibility of a rare adventure. What was going to happen to him he did not know, but something—something. Once the adventurer set sail to explore the earth. Now, he was convinced, there were, for all such uneasy souls, unmapped heavens and uncharted seas. But his wife? Should he tell her about the recovered story? She would sigh and wonder how any sane man could be so pitifully obtuse. Or should he deceive her as he had been doing of late, with no more respectable motive than present peace? Templeton had no illusions about himself. The last fatal slip of moral downfall came, he knew, when you did the oblique thing and found pious reasons for it. If he lied he told himself he lied, and for a long time, in an indirect fashion, he had been lying to Amy. And he had not only lied to her but he did it in a peculiarly specious form which, he had often owned to himself with a mental distaste, might be considered typically feminine and therefore unbecoming

a man. But that he had to accept. He was no big Injun, again he told himself. He was probably a poor creature, if he saw himself as he was, made up of mixed tendencies. Why shouldn't they be feminine, too? The lies he told were the outcome of the new system he had adopted when he discovered he apparently could not accede to all Amy's wishes and could hardly, if he meant to keep soul and body together, argue out each case as it came. Some men in matrimonial harness, took refuge in silence. He knew one in whose daily life he himself had been able to see the line, as if drawn by a heavy crayon, where he had ceased arguing, consoling, retreating, and, under floods of wifely rhetoric, become dumb. This was a hideous thing to do, the most exasperating you could conceive. It was like the pitying silence of the church toward unbelievers. It scorned to argue because it was right.

But to Templeton silence never seemed to be playing the game. His own form of artifice came to him suddenly one day when, by chance, he did some rare generalising and wondered if, his wife distrusting his practical ability for governing circumstance, the way to get his own way might be to advocate the very thing he didn't want and see if she wouldn't push him on toward the thing he wanted, if by now he had not ceased really to want anything. And that, he saw immediately, was, in a manner, what women did to men. They tooled the man along until he unwittingly advanced the very proposition they sponsored, and then the baggages demurely fell in with it. All his married life Amy, who was avid of notoriety, had been

pushing him into paths where he stumbled painfully and without hope. He began by teaching in an academy town and, at the same time, writing stories of a neat type, more or less, he now believed, photographic. His men and women were not moved by elemental emotions; they wore the parochial habits of the genteel middle-class, or they bumped along in the rut of a crass mercantile astuteness. He wanted to be true to life, to reflect it in his own modest way, and when Amy told him he must be a realist and delineate the types he knew best, he found it reasonable, and believed her. But after too many years of muddling over them, they bored him greatly, and it was only when some vivid romance came sweeping in, all sails set, that he knew what was his adoration and his dream, and that if he had not achieved it, it was because he had been too humble or too dull. He had simply been a steady old jog trot of a Dobbin in well oiled harness with the buckles neat and shining. And as newer fashions of exploiting literature came in, he had again allowed Amy to guide him up one step after another on his ascending way. He had given uneasy talks before clubs, he had "read from his works," wondering what madness could make women submit to the infliction, and he suspected, as he thought back to it all, now in the train flying along through the October twilight, that it was her last instigation, not wholly the reminding sunset from his office window, that had inspired him to revolt. She had broken it to him this very autumn. Why didn't he try to get classes in short story writing? A lot of people were doing it. He was used to teach-

ing. After a little or, indeed coincidently with the lessons, he could get out a text book. All the world wanted to write. He could tell them how. Templeton, under his acquiescent manner, was frankly shocked. He had one love, as only he knew, literature, the written word. That he should be turning out half-baked aspirants to put words together by rule, seemed to him the last enormity of which a writing man could be capable. Yet he hadn't told Amy this. He had commented: "Good idea!" and furthermore when she asked him, from time to time, if he wasn't about ready to advertise or put himself in the hands of an agent, gravely drew her into discussion of preliminaries and took a shameful pleasure in seeing how far he could lead her in the mercantile bog where they both floundered though he apparently knew the way. At first, his baseness had been protective coloring, but finally it grew to be a game so intricate and yet so easy that he could hardly deny himself the fun of playing it. Indeed he could rarely deny himself the fun of anything, once it appeared as fun. If this is a book with a hero, it must be understood now that Templeton was not a good hero. He was a very imperfectly put together organism of laziness, tolerance, love of small things, and an unspoken adoration of the greater things he never mentioned, if he could help it, because they struck him as being too appallingly splendid for human eyes to stare at or human minds to fathom. And this earth was an uneasy spot for him. Half the time he seemed to be in a nervous equilibrium between a heaven and hell of the emotions, and again he sank into an uncomplaining lethargy, with no companion-

ship but his book and his pipe. As he was going home, on this October afternoon, he had a prophetic sensation of being about to enter one of those unstable wastes, and he felt a little apprehensive, like a sailor at sunset facing a squally sky.

II

The train drew in at Templeton's station, and he left it with a heart more buoyant than he had carried for a long time. He recognized this and wondered whimsically what his wife would think of a lightness induced by the added weight in his bag of a story he had snatched from an acquiescent editor merely because he happened to feel a mad access of something like irresponsible youth. He had no real hope of keeping the incident from her. But if he could sufficiently savor his gay moment never mind what she felt.

This village of his was a charming, an incredible spot to find so near New York. It had been, up to a few years ago, left forgotten and uniquely rural. It was then that Templeton, yielding to his wife's steady guidance, left the chair of literature in an academic town and, happening on this unspoiled retreat, bought an old brick house with its five acres on a country road. Shortly after, Old Stephen Calvert, himself surprised at the constancy with which his millions rolled up from the manufacture of the Calvert Comfort Shoe, slipped quietly in and began to buy up land in Templeton's section of the town, and thereupon real estate men awoke to prophecy and the boom was on. But the eastern three-quarters of the township had already been absorbed by Calvert (and Templeton, with his tiny bite out of a very picturesque rolling expanse) and

neither of them would sell. One farm also, the Hilliards', Calvert was understood to be waiting for, and newer buyers, from salaried intellectuals who commuted all the year round and monied summer residents who broke out in tennis courts, golf links and gardens, were forced to confine themselves to the western section where also had been farms of a primitive character now almost forgotten in the general smoothing out and decorating. And as if a visible line divided them, east and west were separated by more than the incidents of luxury and plainness.

The Templetons knew all their own guild, newspaper folk chiefly, but did not foregather with them socially because it was known that Mrs. Templeton was too much away from home to entertain, and Templeton, though so good a fellow, proved to be rather a solitary when you tried to bag him for any sort of function. Still he was always responsive when you sat down beside him in the train and passed the time of day. He was Dear Old Templeton. As to Calvert, though he had built a mansion of an amazing simplicity of beauty, nobody on the west side saw any reason for chumming with him. He was a good little man, they said, but his shy manner and solemn tight mouth bore no promise of his having anything to offer, except money, of course, and, though he had retired from the business, there were oceans of that, so much that Old Stephen gave it away right and left, chucked it, indeed, as if it burdened him. His son Champney, however, was different: a distinguished looking fellow who had somehow been too much sobered by the war, though he came through it unhurt, except perhaps a little

queer. He wasn't taking the catastrophe angrily as something the hypocritic elders had brought upon youth, but he had shut his mouth until it was as tight as his father's. Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with him, except that he had taken to running with a rackety crowd. And he wrote poetry. But he wouldn't read it in public, merely remarking it wasn't any good; the less said about it the better.

This late afternoon, as Templeton took his way along the platform and into the country road, gay with fall asters and floating leaves, he felt the hopeful uplift of a happy meeting which always flew like a flag as he came home. It wasn't the family that flew the flag. It was the house. He would dutifully have supposed he loved his wife; but his house he knew he loved. Marred and often unkempt, with meagre plumbing and an absence of convenience that made the servant question a daily menace, it was a house you had to love if you had the artist's eye or even that sense of generous living which certain houses carry with them from a now alien past. He had agreed with his wife to call it Red House, because it was built of brick, and he allowed himself, in moments of discounting neighborly criticism, to refer to it as the Ruin. But it never, with its mellow tint and white pillars, lost its beauty for him, and he could hardly see or think of it without that lifting of the heart which is love. He had never found out just how his wife regarded it except as being at a convenient distance from the city where her centre of action lay. She forgot to tell him. Perhaps she forgot to enquire of her own inner mind; but Templeton judged she would have been content

with a loaf of bread and jug of wine beneath the bough if that incidental nourishment had kept her up to her lecture field activities.

Tonight, as he strode along the ill kept walk between the rows of rusty hollyhocks, the house looked more than ever sympathetic to him. There was one light in the library at the right of the front door. He knew what he should find there at the table under the light: Amy, chronically worried over the magnitude of tasks a little too complex for her, putting together a lecture on current events. A side issue in his mind, a rather annoying query, was that there was no light in the kitchen. He had noted that as he came along. It might mean she had gone, Hilda, the ruthless Swede who had been smashing china and serving excellent foods to them for the last month. He could not suppress a feeling of relief and hopefulness. It was amazing how his heart leaped up when this alien element that so despised his poor house for its lack of practical adaptability, took unto itself the wings of a taxi from the station and fled away. He knew it meant a certain kind of disaster in the matter of food and cleanliness; and yet, in those moments of shutting his door on these strangers who had to be beguiled to come and were so ruthless in going, he was briefly conscious of the dignity and delight of having his house to himself. And after all, he would sometimes excuse himself by thinking, it was he who had the worst of it, he who got up and served Amy's coffee to her because she was so often due in town to keep her appointments, and he who brought back the green bag at night filled to its throat with delicatessen rolls and roast chicken and set

out the unsympathetic fare as deftly as he knew how on the kitchen table. At such times he did pare down the conventionalities of eating. Amy might lift her delicate brows, in an unspoken distress, but no dining-room for him. And sometimes he had washed accumulated dishes far into the night, so it seemed to him, only it was for a period made long in memory by the dulness of it. He shut the hall door with a bang to tell Amy if the Swede had really gone here were cheerful reenforcements, dropped his bag on the hall settle and went into the library where his wife sat exactly as he had imagined her, a confusion of papers before her, and looked up at him with her absent gaze. How pretty she was! only a shade paler than when he had seen her first, not so much a faded rose as a different kind, a lighter pink. And she said exactly what she had said so many times before:

"She's gone. Did you bring anything?"

His brows did contract slightly at that. He had not known she was gone and could hardly arrive hung all over with delicatessen emergency stuff, on the chance. But it was never any use to harry her. She had too much to think of, as it was, though it was outlying domesticities, like hands across the sea with England or trouble with Japan, and she always meant well to him as well as the Antipodes. He put a question of his own.

"Got any eggs?" And then, at once realising that this also was too much to expect her to know, he added, "I'll take a look round," and went off into the kitchen to forage. Out there he got a light, and found that Hilda had been unaccountably merciful. She had left

bread and butter and, strange monument to her skill in a larder so destitute of what a hungry man might reasonably pray for, a fudge cake, black and comely. It might, he reflected absently, contain in its depths the seeds of her anger against them for luring her into a house without modern conveniences; she might have made it to kill at sight. But next moment he had forgiven her, for here were eggs, here was milk, and seeing his path before him, he got up the fire and began to make an omelette. First, he warned Amy. She must wash her hands and come when she was called, and she must quell her haughty spirit and eat in the kitchen with the cook. Templeton really liked to make an omelette, as much as he hated to wash dishes, and he never did it without wondering if he dared toss it up and catch it in the pan. But this he never tried because there was always an emergency behind, an Amy waiting for her food and nobody to rescue him if it smashed. He spread two napkins on the kitchen table, and while he was serving his omelette in hot plates, bellowed at her to hurry. She came drifting in, as gravely charming as if, he thought with a droll eye to the queerness of life, she were on an ambassador's arm, going out to a ceremonious dinner. He pulled back her chair and seated her and brought their portions.

"Well, Missy," said he, "how does this strike you?"

"Very good," said she, eating her omelette delicately and with an absence of interest he always regarded in despair. It seemed to him so elegant, so high-minded, and yet so irritating. It was no way to meet good food. You ought to tackle it with affection, gratitude, even

greed. Sometimes he loved the very earth so much he wanted to roll on it and pull the grasses out of it to make it feel his love. Amy seemed only to probe it daintily with her pretty shoe.

"What did that devil leave for?" he enquired, when the omelette was gone and he had, with a quizzical look at her, wondering how she valued the black atrocity, set the chocolate cake before her, with some relics of rindy cheese.

But Amy was regarding the cake kindly if absently. She cut two wedges with care and placed them on the plates he brought.

"Hilda?" she replied. "I don't really know. It was something about tubs."

"Aren't there tubs?" frowned Templeton, with hostility, as if he had Hilda there before him. "Certainly there are tubs. She'd only to go out there"—he indicated a door leading to what was known as the back kitchen—"to find them."

"Yes," said Amy. "But they've no initiative, maids haven't. They probably didn't look like the tubs at her last place."

"They're hell cats, all of 'em," said Templeton, devouring his cake and finding it toothsome, if deadly.

"I suppose," said Amy tentatively, "you ought to look one up to-morrow. I have to be at the Thursday Morning Club. It's my second lecture. Could you, at noon?"

"Not by no means," said Templeton. He was able to take so firm a stand because he knew she did not really care. The intervals between maids seemed to pass for her somehow. There was always something to eat, the

beds got made, if only in an emergency rush, and she was away so much. And when he was really desperate he got some one, apparently by force of arm. "Hear how still it is, Amy. Listen to the house. It's breathing. It's as glad as we are to get 'em out from under foot. I'm a new man. Let us unite in song."

Templeton had a fair tenor voice and he lifted it up in an adaptation of his own: "Come live with me and be my love." But Amy, who never accompanied him upon his more eccentric flights over the musical scales, laid down her fork and asked:

"How many stories have you out now?"

It came so pat upon the heels of his informing the editor of the best of magazines that he never intended writing any more stories that Templeton gasped. He hedged a little, basely.

"Out?" he enquired. "What do you mean by out?"

"On the road, under consideration. I don't know what they call it."

"I'm afraid," said he sneakingly, "I haven't any." Then, as this seemed a providential opening, he caught at it as the opportunity for leading her mind into the path he wanted it to take, just as she had so often led his. Yet her method was slightly different. It had a hall mark of its own. She always began: "You know you thought you might like to—" thus according him the dignity of being a free agent. He wondered, if he should use the same formula, how soon she would detect it. Too dangerous! he stuck to his own, the one he had been so guiltily considering, and remarked carelessly:

"Queer how some fellows manage to keep ahead of the game."

Her pretty ears were hidden under an artful arrangement of hair, but he could believe he saw her prick them up.

"Now exactly what," she enquired, with a worried look, as if she were about to find it necessary to memorize something of use to her in her own line, "what do you mean by that?"

"Why," said Templeton, getting up and beginning to collect the dishes, "literature isn't so much a profession now. It's a business. The fellows with any go in them know how to do something topographical with it. They pick out a region, tramp over it, settle down on it, make it their own, and write their little fictions about it. Deuced clever, I call it, but it takes a lot of enterprise. Youth, too, I should say."

"It isn't so much youth," said Amy jealously, with a partisanship which always warmed his heart a little, though he was so sure it meant her exploitation of him as an author, not a man. "It's only a question of keeping yourself in condition. You're as fit as a man of thirty."

"Oh, me!" said Templeton, frowningly selecting a ragged napkin from a drawer. He would wash dishes if the powers called on him for that last renunciation of male supremacy, but he would have naught of a mop. Each new handmaid found the mop carefully dried and put away in this same drawer and concluded that Mrs. Templeton, if she had been doing for herself in the interregnum, was no lady. Then he began to make his suds. The soap-shaker was his delight. It

made him think of exhilarating things, bubbles, Venus rising from the foam, though he never could manage that without seeing her sleek head with the tresses flat and darkened from the wet. "Of course I'm fit enough to puddle along here, doing a column and rehashing the old literary wheezes; but I mean the adventurous things that give you a colored frontispiece in a magazine: sheiks and lamas and girls with jars on their heads. Them's the jockeys that mean notoriety and big money. I'm a modest little blossom, don't you know I am? You let me potter along as I can."

Then his wife asked precisely the question he expected her to, and it came so exactly on his intention that he had the grace to be ashamed of himself.

"Certainly I can imagine your having the enterprise to do it. Where would you go?"

Templeton, wiping plates with the iron resolution of a man underrating the fragility of porcelain and remembering only its tendency to slip, replied lightly, though success was quickening his dastard heart:

"Not Africa, I think, nor South America. Eastern Europe perhaps—or Spain." Spain sounded like an afterthought, though he was remembering the man he had heard talking about it at the club, the week before; he had called it the only picturesque country left on earth to-day, mediævalism in the air, an ancient courtesy. "I've often thought," he ventured, "somebody'd do a book with a Pyrenees background. Full of color, you know, not like Hichens in Algeria, but on those lines."

"You could do it," she said promptly.

Now if she had known what he did want to do, she would not have told him he could do it. He did want to go to Spain, or at least hide himself in the Pyrenees, because they had struck his imagination as the solitude which is a lost delight. It was one of those irresponsible vagaries of the mind too long bound to one horizon. He wanted to go to Spain because he wanted to go. In spite of the accepted dictum against changing the mind, not the sky, he wanted perversely and passionately to change his sky. But now, with his heart pelting off to Spain with that desire, it came back with a jolt, for Amy was speaking, saying, as she often did, something vital to him with a detached air of its being the merest commonplace.

"I told you Sally had written. She's coming home."

Sally, his daughter, was abroad with a school-girl chum, where, Templeton seldom knew, her letters were so geographically vague. Once he got the idea that they were tramping through the Tyrol, singing, as Sally wrote, American folk songs, he didn't know whether Kentucky mountains or spirituals. But it was wonderful to have her come home, even if it were only to embark on some new sea of discovery that now lapped about the freedom of girls. She had made a great many trips along those shores charted by his wife as self-expression: dancing, free verse, languages, music.

"May isn't coming, I gather," his wife proceeded. "She has gone into a Paris studio. But Pat is."

"Pat?" Templeton repeated, with some violence. "Not——"

"Yes," said Amy, rising. "Your Pat. Your brother.

What Pat should it be? It seems he and Sally met and he made up his mind to come over with her. That seems to me really intriguing. He's made so much of himself. I want to see how he has done it."

"It's easy enough to see that without having to see him," said Templeton rudely.

But when she enquired how, and asked him why he had never told her, he mumbled something non-committal and turned the light off as a reminder that the dishes were done and they could go back to the library and play lady and gentleman once more. They did go, and Amy settled at once to her work at the writing table. Templeton took the evening paper to the fireside, and although he had run over it on the train, in the intervals of his thinking, spread it out before him and devoted himself to musing on the topic of brother Pat and his success. It was curious that lately he seemed to be giving a good many unoccupied moments to auditing his accounts, as it were, turning the pages of the past and seeing how they read. Perhaps it was all a consequence of that inner discontent which was urging him toward Spain. Now brother Pat, he reasoned, had done clever things with his life, if you accounted it clever to have drummed up a reading public which seemed to be a social public also and supplied the plaudits that kept a writing man alive. Pat had assumed, even before he made good in any degree that, since he had chosen to write, the world should feed him from that source and without too much trouble to him. He had begun with no more money than John, but whereas John had taken that lack into consideration and done the jobs that lay nearest,

though often to the detriment of his tastes, Pat would do nothing save what definitely suited him. He was five years younger than John, and had needed to be boosted from step to step of his college course. John, by that time, had begun his own academic teaching, at once finding it a bore. He liked the boys. He felt himself so absurdly at one with them that he was afraid of their finding it out; but some of the philosophic and literary axioms he was expected to swear by he felt bound to present as amiable fallacies. They liked him the better for that. Even so early, he became vastly popular as Dear Old Templeton; but the trustees, led by confidential executive authority, looked askance at him. Mysteriously the Templeton tradition had not climbed to them. For example, in presenting more or less modern philosophy to his boys, Templeton had felt bound to tell them there was great danger of taking it too literally, and that really it was a sketchy form of fundamental truth which only persons of the richest imagination could deal with adequately. Or else it was a classified but shallow system of observation, what Sissy Jupe called "stutterings." Whereupon it filtered to executive ears that Old Templeton had said all this Freud business was bunk, and the executive ears wagged portentously. It was as well that he married while he was in this chair, half in it and half out, and got away to journalism before his credit was entirely gone.

But meantime Pat finished his course and went to England with very little in his pocket, often afterward augmented by drawing on John, and, when John got him a good job on this side, a series of letters from a

European capital, a column of literary gossip, refused to consider such stumbling blocks to his desire. He was over there to write poetry. He was born to write poetry, and though he wouldn't say he never should write prose, it should be only such prose as he wanted to write. He played round a good deal with the younger set in London, and, by and by, when John secured him what seemed like good fortune in the way of more letters and better paid, even striking into a genealogical trail for an American Crœsus, he answered, somewhat violently, for him, that John knew perfectly well what he wanted to do. What was he pestering him for with all these dull side issues? He was having a high old time with the London men, and it was an atmosphere that suited him. He published two books of verse, one on Victorian lines, patently though skilfully, derivative, and one, when latter day eccentricities came in, appropriately ragged. And then the war came and he did some correspondence and, John was told by an Englishman who came over on a special mission, some valuable intelligence work, and after the war he seemed really to have arrived, and John was proud to know his name was heard in the gates, proud to be asked whether he could possibly be got to do a poem or a bit of reviewing, instead of himself sneaking round trying to pull something off for a needy brother.

And then John, who was a stupid person where he trusted, always seeing through a transparent medium afterward, when it did him no good, woke up to the fact that Pat, instead of being an unpractical bohemian at the mercy of his own genius, had been throughout the best of business men. For he had, even before the

war, begun to write prose, and it was always on some topic most in the public eye. He was brilliantly ahead of the game. He seemed to know exactly who was going to occupy the public mind, and when social welfare became a passionate issue he wrote a brochure full of catchy forecasting. He wrote another on the new verse, another on the musty Victorians, and in war time, when men were dying by the wholesale, he wrote wistfully on spiritual communication. In this instance, he was solemnity itself, but on less austere grounds he was impudent, scintillant, ready for fight. Show him a vulnerable belief, not too widespread or fashionable, and he asked nothing better than to give it a little rallying tap on the shoulder and ask if it really had any valid excuse for being. But he never made the mistake of outraging accepted standards or offending majorities, and the consequence was that he was quoted, smiled over, flattered, as a man of authority and taste. And Templeton, following his steps at first with perplexity, gradually got the swing and tendency of them and silently wondered whether he had, in a professional sense, much use for brother Pat. This "making good" with an ear to the ground, was a tawdry business, so it seemed to him.

III

Templeton, behind his newspaper, gone the long road of his brother's prosperity, was half asleep while Amy continued her worried assorting of notes collected that afternoon. She had an amazing scent for notes. The Antipodes could hardly run up a degree but she had her thermometer between its lips. He still kept the newspaper up, though in a lax hand, not so much because he wanted to shut off her unchallenging gaze as that he could never, while she was working, bear to look at her. She worked tensely, with anxious passion, and he seemed to see the very life oozing out of her. She chose doing it that way, he sometimes thought, with a helpless irritation, and measured her progress by the amount of hardship suffered on the road. He knew exactly how she felt, tied up there in an intellectual knot, her eyes strained with looking, the very skin of her face stiff from concentration. He had been through it himself, in the days when it seemed as if you'd get somewhere if you only had hard time enough doing it. Also it gave you a sense of personal importance and responsibility which was in itself helpful. Suddenly her voice smote upon him like a reproach, and he dropped the paper with a sudden crackle, as if her hand had swept it.

"John, aren't you going to call on those Calverts down at the Meadows?"

"Love to," said he, "but I don't believe they're there."

It was his instinct to block even the least of social activities. What would it lead to: tea, dinner, a course of her lectures in some distinguished house? Whatever it was, it would be safer to keep out.

"Oh, yes," said she, unmoved. She knew her ground. "They're there, fast enough, Stephen Calvert and Champney, father and son. The servants have been there two weeks."

"I heard," said Templeton guiltily, aware that he meant to make the most of a chance rumor at second hand, "I heard they were trying to get away from things in general. Simple life, they're after, that sort of business."

"Nonsense," said Amy. "The simple life they mean is probably every convenience and luxury and a house party twice a week. Not that Old Stephen seems much adapted to house parties. Did you know they call him Old Stephen? In business, I understand. And everywhere. The young man went by on horseback this morning when I was dressing. Sally used to ride in the early morning, when I got the Hilliards' horse for her. Don't you remember?"

He did remember. The Hilliards owned the Naboth's vineyard over the Ridge, he a dour farmer, and his wife Templeton remembered as having a face flaming in distaste for what she had and desire of things she could never get. At least, that was how he read it and wished he might never see it again, the soft side of him was so vulnerable to the miseries of life. Old

Hilliard had been a miser and he was eager to let his horse to Sally, but only in the early morning before the farm work began. And now Hilliard was dead and the daughter, about Sally's age, was, he supposed, away teaching, and the woman with the flaming eyes lived in the little dark house and carried on the farm, with the help of a deaf man, still strong, though he looked as old as Father Time. Templeton was so used to Amy's foresight in social combinations that Sally's riding in the early morning merely meant that Sally was to be manœuvred into riding with young Calvert; but he accepted it as one of the things that had to be and not necessarily terrifying like other of Amy's ambitious combinations, it was so far away. He merely reminded himself of his new theory of action, shifted his ground and asked cheerfully:

"Want me to go over there to-night then? It isn't very late."

And precisely as if the charm of contraries were always going to work, she answered promptly:

"Oh, not to-night! Not for a ceremonious call."

So when she had finished her collating and packed her brief case for the early train, they started for bed quite cheerfully and slept the sleep of those whom undue civilization has exhausted, until two o'clock in the morning, when they were roused simultaneously by a shouting outside. John had been dreaming that Sally was married to Pat and that, when he became profane in the horror of it, Amy had merely stated, in her lecture-room voice, "Don't be silly. It's all according to Freud." Then, on the very heels of the dream, as

they sat up in bed with a unanimity which was funny to him, it became evident that the shouting was really Sally's voice and she was, if there could be any doubt of it, announcing her presence by calling it over and over. "Sally! Sally! Wake up. Sally! Sally!" There was a masculine voice also, but it was not calling. It was laughing. Whose the masculine voice was, Templeton stupidly did not know, but he got out of bed and into his trousers and threw a blanket about Amy as she sat there. It had not occurred to him that she could lie down at a moment of such possibilities, and the air from the open window was cold. But so clumsy was the assault of the kindly blanket that it eclipsed her fair head, and as he left the room he saw she also was getting out of bed, and came back, to pull down the window. And all the time the young voice kept chanting, "Sally! Sally!" Templeton went down, switching on lights as he came to them, and threw open the front door. The two figures waiting there came in quickly, like an assault, and Sally hurled herself upon him, all cold fur and out-door fragrance and soft young flesh. Templeton had had time to be amazed at her beauty, as if it were a change in the Sally who had gone away, not realizing how much it owed the smart Paris hat and the luxurious collar of fur. He hugged her to him and would have kissed her except that she was kissing him so fast on the cheek, and over her shoulder he was regarding the man who smiled and waited. And the upper part of his face probably recalled something, things painful and also kind, and he cried out:

"Good Lord! I didn't know you!"

Patrick, his brother, wore eye-glasses and he took them off now and wiped the steam from them on a flying tag of Sally's dress.

"You haven't changed much, old man," said he, with the same implication of tolerance John had always found in his voice and sometimes been amused by and sometimes irritated. "Where's Amy?"

At that moment Amy, all a trailing prettiness in long braids and rosy negligée, came down the stairs. Sally withdrew her twining arms from Templeton and stood with them outspread. Having a neat sense of values, she knew it would be a sloppy piece of business to rush up to meet her mother. There would be no standing ground from which to kiss. Amy was a good deal moved. Templeton had not seen her so since Sally went away. "At least, she loves her girl," he had time to comment to himself before he turned to the library door and motioned Pat in there. It seemed indecent not to allow the mother and daughter a rapt minute of their own. But Pat stopped first to drop his coat and hat on the settle, and then, as if divining John's wish, he turned away to the library, without a greeting look at Amy.

"How about grub?" asked Templeton, throwing some cones and kindling on the library coals, and Pat answered:

"Oh, no, we dined in New York. We were going to stay the night, and then Sally got restive and would take that last train. Well, sister Amy?"

For she had now entered the room, flushed and

rather moist in the eyes, Sally with a possessive arm about her. Sally had thrown aside her coat, and Templeton found her slim length pleasing.

"You're Amy. Of course you are," Pat concluded deftly. "Unless you're Sally's sister."

Amy was a literal lady. She was wont to look scrutinizingly at her husband's more impalpable jests, and now she answered seriously:

"Oh, no. I am Sally's mother."

"Take off your hat, child," said Templeton abruptly. "Let me see how you look."

Sally complied at once and tossed her pretty Romeo cap, all flowers that didn't look like flowers God made but a French confection more bizarre, to the sofa. For doubtless God, in making flowers, has to observe some restrictions of His own which may be called laws, but the French can follow their own bewildering fancy. She stood there before him, her arms at her sides, and waited to be judged. First, however, she had smoothed her wonderful hair with both hands, a quick motion he remembered from her childhood when they had been intimate friends. It was something Templeton seldom acknowledged to himself: but from the moment Sally came to her teens she seemed to be detached from him in some strange way, to cling to her mother only. He used to wonder if it was because her mother, with the girl's growth, wanted so strenuously to graft on her those theories of development Amy had sown in her lecture field that she made a queer emotional bid for her love, an affection so tyrannous in its devotion that it gave the child, in the name of individuality, scope for every waywardness and, on the ground of the

amplest liberty, thrust upon her decisions cruelly large. It was no wonder, Templeton used to think, when he dwelt on these things, that Amy would not trust the child to him. It was a case of father versus mother, and father hadn't a word to say for himself. To him, a child wasn't an organism to be molded by the book. It was a strange pliant wonder from the hand of mystery, to be left to grow in the rain and sun. You must watch it though and guide the darling: plenty of bother it'll give you, too, when it comes to early frosts.

This was what Sally seemed to be: a slim creature with a forehead classically low, fine eyebrows, a nose wilfully out of drawing but curiously beguiling to the eye, and braids of leaf-brown hair wound round her head in the fashion of her mother's youth. It was the hair that perplexed Templeton. It was not bobbed. But why? It was not waved or bulbous or broken out into knobs in queer places. It was just coiled about as if there were so much of it it had to be kept under pins. Sally saw what he was thinking, and blushed. Pat saw it also, and gave her away.

"Don't waste any time on that, Jack," said he, pulling forward a chair for Amy and looking as if he wished Sally would sit down, so he might take one, too. "I'll give you the tip. She's got more hair than any seven ordinary girls put together and she worships it, and quite right. I saw it down once, on shipboard, when she was having it washed. And, for one thing, this is all she can do with it, unless she cuts it out in gobs, and for another she's an artful minx. She wants the eye of man to be drawn to it and the voice of man to say, 'My stars! I wish I could see it down'."

Templeton could not be sorry for her. She looked a little taken aback, but he saw she had enough impudence of her own to carry it off. She recovered herself almost instantly, made a pretty mouth at Pat, and patted her hair again. Amy was looking helplessly at her husband.

"It's not quite three," she said. "But the beds—I don't know."

It was one of Pat's graces that he always took things as he found them, and with an admirable readiness. He, too, accepted the sufficiency of the loaf of bread and jug of wine beneath the bough.

"I'll sit here by the fire and smoke," said he. "You three go to bed."

"I shall roll myself up in that rug and camp on the sofa," said Sally. "Yes, mother. Pile off to bed."

Amy continued looking helplessly at her husband. She did want her sleep. How otherwise was she to take the early train with any promise of fitness for a fagging day? Templeton slipped a hand through her arm and turned her toward the door.

"Go ahead," said he. "I'll be along."

She drifted up the stairs and he went back into the library and piled the andirons higher. The two in there, like old campaigners, had already settled themselves, and Sally's voice sounded drowsy from her rug.

" 'Night, father. I suppose mother's off on an early train."

How did she know, he wondered, and then immediately supplied the answer. Sally expected life to be going on exactly as it had been when she went away eighteen months before, as indeed it was. But what

would she say if she knew he was off to Spain? Pat was evidently too sleepy or too lazy to talk and Templeton, leaving Sally's perfunctory question unanswered (for she was now asleep, looking so lovely, so inviolate in her maiden charm that he thought her guardian angel must have a highly satisfactory job of it) followed his wife upstairs. But not to their own room. He opened the door of a chamber on the east and stood questioning its cold yet orderly aspect, and he blessed the departed handmaid who had evidently "gone over" the house before leaving. The room was dustless, the bed was smooth. As to the bed, he assumed, with a masculine obtuseness to the value of freshly aired sheets, that it was made. All that was needed was a match for the fire, symmetrically laid, and he turned away with a relieved certainty that Pat was provided for, and opened Sally's room, which was in the back, with an outlook on the slope where the white pillars of the Calverts' new house were dimly visible. That was a little less orderly, but decent enough to satisfy the unexacting eye. Sally must put up with it. Perhaps she could even lick it into shape herself. He went back to bed and got a couple of hours before going down to the furnace and the kitchen range. It seemed not more than a minute to morning, and while he was dressing he thought—devilishly, it seemed to him—of another prop to drive under the house of deceit he was building for his mountains in Spain. It would be exceedingly unwise to tell Pat he had planned kicking over the family edifice to sleep in the tents of his own nomad inclinations. According to the system of contraries he had

adopted with Amy, she would refrain from telling only if she were urged to tell.

"I suppose that idea of taking the less known parts of Europe for a new stamping ground would be the very thing Pat would like," he said, basely alive to his own motives.

"Don't tell him," said she promptly, beginning to pin up her braids in readiness for her bath. "The continent of Europe is open to him and has been for a good long time. Just make your plans and say nothing."

And while Templeton put on the water for coffee he quoted Hamlet: "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"

When Amy had had her bath he told Sally the coast was clear and after she had scrubbed she could summon Pat. And meantime he had touched off the fires in their two rooms, and began to feel a little surprised at the emotions of the host struggling with a squalid situation where nobody proposed to help him.

"It's a confounded nuisance," he told himself. "What do mere things want to get in our way for so damnably?"

Amy, to his surprise, had also been considering mere things. She appeared before him, fresh and trim, as he stood at the kitchen range in a crimson rage with bacon. Why did the stuff insist on being either burned to a crisp or, if you tried to balk it there, keeping that unsightly look of being plain sliced pig?

"We shall have to get somebody at once," said Amy. "There are the Hilliards. They say the daughter is living at home. Couldn't you run down, on your way

to the station, and see if you could get either her or the mother to accommodate? Unless you bring back somebody from town."

She was sweet, she was lovely, and she was impossible, but she was his. So he answered her temperately:

"I couldn't go on the way to the train. Maybe I can bring back somebody though. But as we're both to be away, it seems as if Sally'd have to stand by."

"Oh, no," said Amy. "Sally's going with me."

Templeton stopped in his ministrations to her plate.

"Now," said he, "what for?"

Amy began placidly eating.

"I am giving a rather exceptional talk," she said. "Sally would meet some very important people. She can't begin too soon."

He had brought his own cup and plate, and now sat down at the table.

"Is she," he suggested, a little bitterly, "to build up a clientèle?"

"Sally has a good deal of valuable material," she answered. "Post-war impressions. I know just the field for them."

"Poor little devil!" said Templeton. "Has she got to be thrown to the lions, too?"

"The child must express herself," Amy told him, patronisingly, he thought, because he had never yet fathomed these necessities of child nurture. "Sally is quite unformed; but she'll find herself."

Templeton, not knowing he did it, groaned over his plate, and Amy looked up at him with a fleeting sympathy.

"Choke you, dear?" she asked, and Templeton grimly said he did.

They finished their meal in silence and, toward the end of it, heard a miniature cannonade from above stairs, soft thuds which, to Templeton, seemed to be a summons from Sally in trouble. He went to the stairs and called up to her.

"No! no!" her voice came down to him, sounding, he had a moment's cheer in feeling, just as a morning voice ought to sound, full of a gay acceptance of anything the day could possibly bring. "I'm only throwing shoes at Pat's door. He's got to wake up. I've thrown all yours and mother's. I'll make him sort 'em out."

Templeton kept on smiling over the voice. He did love the young whelp, he told himself, as he went back to finish his coffee, though he had ceased paying much attention to her, she seemed so entirely her mother's and not his. The pang of that surrender was always in the background of his mind, and now his present eagerness struck him so comically that he had to present it to Amy, though in a vaguer form.

"Don't you know," he said, "how middle-aged folks tell you they never'll have another dog, it's so risky? You get too much attached to 'em. They get run over or something, and there you are. But a nice pup comes along and wags at you, and you go down like a row of bricks."

She glanced up at him absently, and then, with more interest, he thought, at the kitchen clock.

"I won't wait for you," she said. "I've simply got

to get that train. I'll send the taxi back. Or perhaps you're ready now."

At that moment Sally came in, bright as the morning and her own voice. She gave them a nod and poured a cup of coffee. This was the sort of breakfast she was accustomed to in her past at home. Mother was always on the verge of leaping off into some intellectual abyss and father trying to sweep manuscripts into the green bag and striding after, smiling sometimes, oftenest profane.

"Did he answer?" asked Templeton, debating whether the coffee ought to be left standing for Pat, and the toaster in evidence.

"Oh, he heard all right," said Sally. "No, he didn't answer. He won't be up before noon. The express'll wake him, bringing our trunks. If they don't, I expect the man'll leave them on the porch."

This was more or less a question, as if she had some interest in the coming trunks, but not too much, and Templeton wondered if she were going to develop Amy's imperviousness to the visible side of things. She might, he thought recklessly, for all him. He wouldn't sponge on her, nor, on the other hand, would he allow her to sponge. He loved her, but he wasn't going to have another woman turn him into a housemaid because she had the far sight that takes only the international into account and fails to salute the duster under her nose. A honk from the front of the house: the cab was there, and Amy and Sally straightened into action, slipped into their coats, and were off before he had located the green bag. But that was no matter.

He wasn't going with them anyway, and after they had disappeared over the brow of the hill and left the stillness a motor alone can leave with its coughing offensiveness when it is with you and its devilish ability to take itself away, he looked into the library and gave it a nod indicating his liking for tranquillity, his appreciation of its relief when they were all gone clawing away into the night of world activities, so far from what any library could understand. Then he frowned over the kitchen fire, put on more coal, with a depleting certainty that no art or luck could keep it alive until his return, wrote a scrawl to Pat, telling him, though hopelessly, to stoke with discretion, and started, bearing the green bag. But outside, in the gay morning, he stopped at the gate, reflected that he would have to run for the train and that, if he took the next one, nobody would reproach him, and set off into a path through the field behind his house. Suddenly he had felt a distaste so strong for coming back and finding the house deadening down in its squalid state of beds unmade and all the neglect of yesterday lying like dust on the cold surface of to-day, that he could not face it. Suppose he did bring back one of those hybrid products of household labor, a woman half scornful of his modest standing as employer, half jealous of her own rights, the game would have to be played all over again. She would despise her job from the start. He must at least begin with a clean house and defer the climax of discontent.

At the end of his path where it met the back road, was the Hilliards' farmhouse, small, clapboarded, a disorder of mowing machine, horse rakes and decrepit

vehicles at the side under a shed flanking the great barn. The barn always looked tragic to Templeton, as typical of the ambition or need of a strenuous farmer who provided for his livestock before his family. It seemed, in every sense, to have swallowed the house. The dignity of the place—and it had great dignity because of them—lay in six gigantic maples at the front, straight and proud as if they stood for all America and her beauty. There was no fence. The yard lay open to the road. Two women were hurrying toward each other along this road, one of them Eunice Hilliard, the farmer's widow, the woman with the flaming eyes. The younger one, a tall, powerful creature, running now to meet her, must be the daughter, though her he had never seen. Before they met, the daughter had cried out, and to Templeton it seemed as if there were something passionate in her tone. It was not too extreme to call it anguish.

"I've been hunting for you. How could you, oh, how could you!"

The older woman, seeing him, did not answer, but, when she met her daughter, told her he was there. The girl glanced at him, and then the two came on together, and Templeton, approaching them, had time to see how unlike they were, both in every physical characteristic and the expression they now wore. The mother was a thin creature, lax in her walk and the droop of her slim shoulders. Only the burning, almost accusatory look of the eyes in her faded face would have caught the attention of any man. They seemed to demand something, ignorantly perhaps, and to be ready to drown themselves in tears because they despaired of

getting it. Happiness, he guessed, some version of her own form of happiness, perhaps only a rocking chair by the window and a flowered gown. She was dressed in an uncouth coat and a loose gingham made on an old pattern, as if it and she belonged to a bygone time and were passive under the memory of it: only the eyes contradicted every humbleness her aspect carried. The tall daughter, with her harmony of line and bearing, was brown-eyed and brown-haired, with a sweet freshness of skin, not under a delicate bloom like Sally's, but peony pink after her haste, and all a defenceless sorrow and reproachful anger. Somehow the mother had hurt her, offended her, and he was vaguely sorry for them both. Meanwhile he was advancing toward them, and at a couple of paces stopped and doffed his hat. The girl, he saw, was startled. She had expected him to pass them, and turned out slightly. Templeton smiled at them. He spoke apologetically.

"I'm your neighbor," he said. "The brick house over there. We're in a peck of trouble. My wife wondered if you'd help us out."

The girl's face quickened into a grave interest.

"Sickness?" she asked.

"No," said Templeton, with the droll lift of his eyebrows, as if really it were something worse. "Our help has left us." He knew that was the only word. Maid wouldn't do. Servant was worse. "Last night my daughter and my brother came unexpectedly, and this morning my wife has gone to town for a lecture. The house is riding out"—he knew that as a telling phrase —"and my wife wondered if, as a neighbor"—he looked at the mother now. The daughter was the

school-teacher, removed by unscalable barriers from the class of "help"—"if you'd be willing to come over and get things into order before we come back to-night."

He made it sound like a very kind thing to do, and neither, he saw, took offense. But the mother shook her head laxly.

"It's a busy time of year," she said, in a sweet, thin voice. "I don't believe I could."

But a vividness leaped into the girl's face. It was like a recognition, a discovery. She had thought of something that threw her warmly on Templeton's side.

"Why, yes, we could," she said. Her grave voice thrilled with an impulsive ardor. "Oh, mother, yes, we could! We'd both go over in the morning and then the middle of the afternoon."

Templeton was surprised. This was not the sort of school-teacher he was accustomed to among these country girls who had climbed a step above the family hearth. He looked at her with his ready deference. But mother was speaking now, with no interest in her voice, as if she had to deny the girl so many things she might as well concede this one.

"Oh, well!" she said.

Templeton's heart rose. The house itself, he knew, would thank him for bringing their domestic habits into it. He began to thank them, but the girl was turning to follow her mother up the path.

"That's all right," she said. "We'll be glad to."

And Templeton, quite light-hearted, dismissed domesticity from his mind, and set off by the cross cut for his train.

IV

Templeton, getting home that late afternoon with the sky clear above him and a more balmy air than usual for the month, thought whimsically that the tranquillity of the outer world too often presaged the turmoil of his domestic battlefield. How often had he gone home casting friendly glances at the roadside scene, irrationally convinced that, because nature was behaving prettily, all was right with the world, to find a cold, sometimes an empty house, with Amy presumably on the wings of public oratory and self-expression! He was getting to the age, he told himself, where people didn't dare climb for fear of being dashed to earth, just as they didn't dare love again. But when, with a false air of bravado, he opened the door and walked into his house, he found he could trust circumstance to the point of loving domestic peace, if only somewhat shyly and with prudent reservations. As to the house, he decided to love it very hard in its present aspect because it might never be like this again. It was warm, it had a wide open look, and there was the sound of voices from the library. Had Amy somehow managed it? He hadn't himself been able to ravish a housemaid from the two intelligence offices he had visited, in his brief luncheon freedom, and the past had taught him it was quite unlikely Amy had even given a

thought to it on her high pressure day. But Amy and her daughter could wait. He was simply too curious. He must see how the present accommodators were getting on. He strode in through the hall to the kitchen, and opened the door on a scene governed by smells alone. They seem to float and hang and linger, potent to sway a man's emotional nature like no subtle product of the perfumer's art. He stopped and gave himself up to it. What was the blend in that entrancing air? Potatoes, roasting chicken—he needn't have brought the pallid stage property of a fowl he had snatched from a rotisserie on the way to the train—celery and other less palpable, more moving odors. Elizabeth, the daughter, knelt before the oven, basting the sacrifice within. She rose and closed the door, carefully, not with a clang.

"Shut the kitchen door," she said absently, her mind on her task, and added, as an afterthought, "please."

He did, and shut himself inside.

"If you don't want the smell to get over the house," he recommended pleasantly, "you're dead wrong. A smell like that ought to be allowed to travel all over it and up attic and hang itself on the rafters where you could find it to-morrow. I hope to roll myself up in it and sleep in it to-night. Where'd you get a chicken to smell like that?"

Instead of taking out his own stage chicken, he found he was holding the neck of his bag together, as if the creature might squawk and shame him.

"We had a few," she said, frowning up at a set of shelves, as if she hoped to find something that eluded her. "This one was all picked and ready to

send off by the R. F. D. I thought you'd got to have something."

"The chopping bowl and chopper are in the pantry," said Templeton cleverly. "If that's what you want."

It was. She wasted no words in saying so, but went off into the pantry and returned with the little scarred wooden bowl that had been one of the witnesses to his frequent discomfitures. Often he had chopped in it, and never unerringly as to fine or coarse. He was pleased to see her lift it to the light and regard it frowningly. Dusty, the look said. She washed it at the sink. Then she took the vital organs known as giblets from a saucepan on the back of the stove and began to chop. Templeton was embarrassed. He had got to talk down the chopping and find out where they two were. Was she to be treated solely as a neighbor, and had he to be merely grateful, besides rewarding her in some superdelicate way, or was she all business and glad of the job?

"You're a school-teacher," he said, raising his voice and finding it sounded accusatory. "I never connected school-teachers with giblets."

She was chopping, with her back to him, and he suddenly felt a masculine approval of the way her dark hair came up behind her ears.

"I'm not teaching now," she said, with a manner more pointedly brief than the words.

"You wouldn't—" here he stuck and then said, finding it was the chopping that irritated him, "You could sit down and put the tray in your lap. When you do it on the table it makes such a confounded noise."

Of that she took no notice. She merely asked:

"Have you somebody coming?"

"A maid?" he enquired.

"Yes. If you haven't, mother and I'd be glad to come over every day—do it between us—you're away so, both of you, we could clear up the house in the forenoon and have dinner ready when you get back."

So everybody knew it, he thought, knew just what sort of house this was, inhabited by nomads who returned to their tents by night. Poor house! Surely it deserved better things, if its owners didn't.

"Have you," he asked, "spoken to Mrs. Templeton?"

A queer little look winged across her face, but she answered gravely.

"Yes, sir. She seemed agreeable."

"Well," said Templeton emphatically, "I'm more than agreeable. Speaking from the delirium induced by these cooking smells, I'm in ecstasy. How about—" he was on the point of saying "wages" but changed it absurdly to "salary." And she answered incredibly:

"Anything you like, sir."

At that, Templeton, feeling she knew more of what she meant than he did, got out of the kitchen. He paused a minute in the hall and then, still with his green bag, went out at a side door to a small building at the back which he had, in the beginning, ambitiously set up as a garage. But there his ambition stuck. He had no car and he had got into the habit of regarding the garage as a study where he might run away from Amy's too fervent intellectualism and begin to write the things he wished to have written. And yet he knew in his heart it would never be done here. When a man began to make his task a matter of

floor and rafters and whimper about having written thus and so if he had been able to set his scene more aptly, he only showed how dried up or rotten he really was. But now he had a use for the garage. He was going to leave the stage chicken there. She mustn't see it. Already she had begun to usurp that pronoun men set aside for the well beloved or the cook. Elizabeth was "she."

He looked about him in the dim cobwebby interior. There were hooks on the wall, and he looped the string of his parcel over one of them and left it hanging. Then he went over the other articles in his bag, trying to think exactly what they were. So many times had he acquired these pallid or too yellow products of the confectioner's art, at a hasty snatch from some delusively picturesque counter, that one was the same as another in retrospect. She might despise them. (He thought the house not only smelled of chicken but hot apple pie.) He might leave them with his deplorable stage product and tell Sally she could run down to-morrow and get an indigestion out of them. On the other hand, she—the regnant she—might find they helped out with her dessert. He might put them on plates in the closet beside the dumb waiter and trust her to find and judge them, he hoped, tolerantly. So he turned back to the house and, having accomplished this crafty deed, went on into the library, and there were his wife and daughter before the fire with a great combined length of silk-stockinged legs basking in the warmth. Sally, he thought, looked, as she lay back in her arm-chair, the tips of her fingers together partly screening her face, a little fagged. Not interested,

could it be? unmoved by her mother's flow of speech? Amy was never consciously tired. She found out usually, at the end of six or eight hours' work over hastily assembled data, that her face felt stiff, her arm was aching and there was a pain at the back of her neck; but this never seemed to call for temperance in leading the intellectual life. You might speak of it as "tired," if you liked. She had no particular name for it. It was simply an expected obstacle you encountered on the way to the goal. There was no reason for stopping short of that point to recover your form. It was the goal itself that mattered, not your own state of being when you got there. She was, Templeton understood, talking about some woman high in social influence, who could help Sally along to some goal of her own. She had looked up when her husband came in and given him a little nod—a too perfunctory recognition of his existence, that nod often seemed to him—and finished her exposition of what the socially placed lady could do and what Sally must do in return.

"For you know," she was saying, "the young people of the day. You've seen them in all those dreadful places—the war and all—" Templeton often jarred her earnest desire of being exactly right by telling her she mustn't fill in the comet tails of her vaguenesses by saying "and all"—"People aren't going to bother about this type of boy and girl forever," said Amy, with an acumen that sometimes surprised him. "They've almost stopped now. The thing for you to do is to jump in and give a talk about it: what it means, to itself, to you because you're young."

Sally spoke now in a rather dreary voice, not exactly

in answer to her mother, but as if some stray word had jogged her into rebuttal.

"I don't feel so very young," said she.

Templeton, now making a silent third before the fire, looked quickly round at her. What was the matter with the child? What had happened to her since she went away from them on that fantastically independent pilgrimage of hers? Was it the disorder of the emotions that used to be called love? He had called it that himself once, shyly, in the despised Victorian fashion, but now, knowing there were queer newfangled terms for it and not having found it leading to mountaintops or wide pasturage himself, he was content to call it a disturbance and let it go at that. Sally did not meet his glance. Perhaps her screening fingers came a little nearer together, and she shifted one slender leg over the other. Templeton knew that was as far as he could go with her, and asked:

"Where's Pat?"

"Nobody knows," said Sally. "We came home on the train before yours, and found the house heavenly Wasn't it, mother, all warm and dusted and that lovely dear in the kitchen—but no Pat. I thought he'd got panic, it was so still—like heaven, you know, and Pat wouldn't know what to do in heaven—and put for town. Father, who is she, that duckie in the kitchen? I wish you could have seen her fill the pie."

One of Sally's old-fashioned ways was that she said father and mother with an out-dated accent of respect. They had not taught her, or even asked it of her. She assumed it, just as she refrained from bobbing her hair, and Templeton was ashamed of feeling she really did it

to make herself unique. Sally was a sensitive child, with a love, when she was too little to conceal it, of the beautiful, what she called then the pwetty. Who couldn't say these young rowdies—not rowdies out of high spirits alone, but bravado—hurt her nerves and she refused to make herself like them? They had strained yet muddled voices and a way of running lightly to indicate they were wholly emancipated from the constricted livers of the day of hour-glass forms. But they weren't pwetty, he judged, either inside or out. Templeton was too wise an old bird to believe Sally did not imitate them and their time from any innate devotion to form. Only, he said to himself, her love of beauty did tell her what was beautiful. It was like a finger on the dial. And she was avoiding what wasn't beautiful merely because she had the competitive instinct to be at least pwetty herself, the pwettiest of all. He had no parental illusions as to her respect for him and Amy when he heard that low-toned father and mother. He knew Sally thought it sounded better than dad and mum.

After that quick glance at her, he had settled himself to telling her, so far as he knew it, the story of the girl in the kitchen. Yes, she was the daughter of Old Hilliard that lived over the Ridge, only a couple of fields away, as she might remember, but it seemed farther because of the Ridge. She had been quite a figure in local history because Old Hilliard was stingy as they make 'em and the girl had gone through amazing hardships to get herself educated. She had run away from home almost as a child and worked for her keep at one boarding-house after another in the

near-by mill town, and though Old Hilliard himself, wanting her help, had got her back time and again, just so often she ran away, and the mill boarding-house found her such a competent slavey that it received her whenever she appeared. She studied madly. She seemed to be the sort of creature who could digest a book while she washed the workmen's shirts, and very early she began teaching school, and it seemed as if her fight had been justified, even in her father's eyes, because she came home to spend vacations and paid her way. And now that he was dead it was assumed that she would take her mother out of the dreary scene of labor uncrowned by either love or cheerfulness; but instead she had resigned her position to come home. Amy, caught by the length of the tale flowing on as confidently as if he had been a part of it, was unwontedly curious.

"How in the world," she asked, "did you get hold of all that?"

He looked rather serious. What he remembered was a story that had seemed lacking in humor, from the first, though it had been rehearsed to him on several trips to town. It concerned a fellow who knew her but hadn't seemed to realize that Old Hilliard's daughter might have standards of her own.

"One of our neighbors?" enquired Amy.

"Oh, no! no! Some kind of a mill man that saw her on the road and asked her to show him across lots, and he got gay with her, and she gave him an upper cut or something of the sort and—well, that's all there was of it. Only he didn't know there was a caddie somewhere in the underbrush, coiled to spring, and the

caddie told. I've always remembered the girl with a good deal of pleasure. Fancy the muscle of that arm!"

"Rotten!" said Sally reflectively, and he hardly knew whether she found rottenness inherent in the world of men or in the noble art of self-defence. But Sally herself went far toward clearing that up. "I'm not sure, though," she said, in her clear young voice still thrilling with surprise over the queer things she found in the world. "Not so long as she got in her lick. I've often thought I'd like to do that: know just where to hit and do it like lightning and, before you half knew you'd done it, see him bashed in there on the ground. Oh no, mother, I don't mean it the wrong way. Just the right way. S'pose I was alone in this house and a yeggman got in and told me to hold up my hands and instead of doing it I went for him like a thousand of brick and—gee!"

"John," said Amy, in a voice he heard from her only over abuses exceptionally flagrant, "I want you to tell me who that man was. He ought to be pilloried."

"Oh, no," said Templeton, reflecting that silence was almost always golden. "Besides, I don't know. He's forgotten it himself by now. So's the girl, I've no doubt."

Sally made a little clucking with her tongue.

"She's coming," said the tongue.

It was Elizabeth, at the library door. She looked at Amy and said, with an irreproachable cadence: "Dinner is served."

The three were absurdly embarrassed, Templeton because he had no trust in Amy's discretion and could fancy her probing the matter to the bottom, coming

down on the girl after dinner and asking her point blank who the man was whom she had treated to an upper cut. But Sally got quickly out of her chair and seemed to hustle her mother not only into the dining-room but, Templeton could believe, into another frame of mind. He disappeared to give his hair a lick and wash his hands. That was all the concession he had made of late to any recognition of dinner as an event. And as they sat and ate and talked, with the false decorum induced by servants, chiefly of Sally's life abroad, the new maid waited on them with a perfect skill. After dinner they went back to the library and there, in perhaps half an hour, Elizabeth appeared again, and curiously, though it only struck Sally and her father so afterward, addressed herself to him:

"I've picked up the dishes and rinsed them off. Could I leave them and do them with the breakfast ones in the morning?"

Templeton was about to answer but remembered who was properly commanding officer. Amy also remembered.

"Certainly," she said. "You want to get home."

"I ought to," said the girl. She suddenly appeared harassed, and as if events were pushing her. At that instant she looked to Templeton like her mother, only the mother, he could not help feeling, had some sort of passionate urge and the girl was driven by things outside herself.

"She might come after breakfast," he said to his wife. "We'll manage breakfast ourselves."

Amy, although she knew this meant that he would manage, seemed instantly to be submerged under

domestic waters, not even a floating tress visible to tell where she had sunk. Templeton, who had queer ideas that did much toward keeping him humorously alive, sometimes wondered what kind of a life she lived down there below. Were there mermaids? And how about Davy Jones? Once he wrote a column that proved very popular about the company you might keep if you persistently took refuge under the waters of oblivion from the things that bored you. A mighty beguiling world down there, he understood. Sally, too, saw her mother sinking and put in before Templeton could speak:

"Of course! I'll be up. It'll be great fun."

The girl turned, but unexpectedly Amy rose to the surface to put a question. Templeton was afraid it was going to be the one about the upper cut.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Elizabeth," said the girl, and was quietly away.

"That doesn't seem to be the name," said Templeton thoughtfully, "not as I remember it."

And Amy commented, in a relief he mentally resolved never to disturb:

"You probably mistook the name. I dare say it's another girl altogether,—about that story, you know."

"I dare say," said Templeton falsely and wondered, without much interest, where his lies were going to lead him.

V

Elizabeth was not the name the girl's mother had given her. This was Gladys. In the month before her birth Mrs. Hilliard's starved romanticism could find nothing so near satisfaction as the sound of Gladys for her girl. The baby was to be a girl. She was sure of that. Old Hilliard was sure it would be a boy because the farm demanded a boy to sweat with him, and he consented indifferently to Gladys, knowing his son would come into the world as Ezra; and after his first huffiness was over, he accepted Gladys in silence, since, for a mere girl, one name was as good as another. But the child, as soon as she got her bearings in a world of mysterious drawbacks, settled the matter for herself. Long before she left the district school, she refused to answer to Glad Hilliard and served prim notice on new teachers that her name was Elizabeth, giving each syllable due value, and her mother, consulted as to the fact of the case, sombrely confirmed it. Eunice had, by this time, abandoned so many foolish hopes that she was convinced all hopes were foolish.

To-night, Elizabeth put on her coat and hat, gave one look at the orderly kitchen, as if to bid it preserve its self-respect until her return, and went out through the back door to the path across the fields. As she went, her face changed from the intentness she had been bending on her work to the look of one in

fear of something, not of anything left behind but something waiting for her. When she stepped over the low stone wall into the second field, she was going very fast, and when she reached her mother's house it was almost at a run, a swift gliding gait not without dignity. She stopped an instant in the yard and looked up at the windows, partly to get a few long breaths she might need to carry her through, partly to see if the windows would tell her anything. But they were blank and she went on, lifted the latch of the door and stepped into the large entry between the two front rooms. The air was warm, with a pleasant smell of cooking, but the house told another tale: nobody at home. She did not even glance into the rear rooms to see if her mother might possibly be there, the house offered such conclusive evidence. She turned and opened the front door again and there, as if conjured up by her passionate summons, her mother was coming up the path. And if the daughter had seemed to hurry, as if she were driven by a wind, the mother came still faster, bent a little as if the wind were in her face to hold her back, though the one behind was urging her. Elizabeth, defeated in her purpose of going out in search of her, turned away from the door, though she left it open, and went back into the sitting-room where she began taking off her hat and coat. Her fingers worked stiffly, and she was cold to the bone. She had wanted more than anything in her present life to find her mother at home. Her mother had not been at home, and she had wanted more than anything then to rush off to find her, run herself to death to find her; but now that Eunice was

here, coming back of her own will, the sight of her was sickening. Mrs. Hilliard came on, and having seen her daughter and finding no reason now for hurrying, at a slower pace. It was a discouraged gait. She stepped in at the door and, without closing it, began taking off her things.

"You'd better shut the door, hadn't you?" came Elizabeth's voice, carefully controlled but somehow, to the woman hearing it, savagely accusatory, full of tears. "Come in here where it's warm. I'll take your things."

The mother stepped meekly into the sitting-room, as if Elizabeth had to be obeyed. She had thrown off her plaid coat and her hat with what Elizabeth considered a foolish feather, put on at the wrong angle and indicating, not "style" but a childish desire for something "odd." She surrendered both coat and hat into the hands of her daughter, and then, as if she hardly knew what to do with herself in her own house, sank into an arm-chair by the fireplace and pretended to warm her hands. Elizabeth came back with a good-sized birch log in her arms and threw it on the blaze. She swept up the hearth with a worn little broom that had survived many disasters from the coals, and then, because they had to speak sometime in this miserable intimacy of a common roof where no real communion was, said to her mother:

"I told them over there I'd leave the dishes till morning, and you and I'd both go over a while and clear up."

Mrs. Hilliard lifted her large tired eyes from the fire and spoke, with no real conviction fitting the decision of the words:

"They mustn't think we can keep goin' over there. They'll have to have a girl."

"I told them," said Elizabeth, not taking the trouble to shade her voice into either argument or assertion, "we'd do it every day. We'd be pleased to."

Mrs. Hilliard looked quickly up at her, but she knew the set of her daughter's mouth and looked away again.

"What under the sun made 'em s'pose you'd work out?" she asked obliquely.

"I'm going to work out," said Elizabeth, with the quiet of a purpose founded on impeccable motives. "I said I would."

"Well!" commented Mrs. Hilliard. Her face cleared a little, as if she found the prospect not so uninviting. "You goin' to stay there nights?" she asked, and Elizabeth thought she asked it hopefully.

"No," she said, with a distinctness that was bitter in an implication her mother felt. "No, I'm coming home nights. But I told 'em we'd work a spell in the forenoon clearing up, and then we'd be back, late afternoons, and get dinner."

Her mother opened her lips as if on the refusal Elizabeth expected and then closed them again. It was best, she judged, not to speak. She was afraid of her daughter, who was educated and right and always had her way in the end. But it was impossible, she knew, to tie herself up to work that would eat into these late afternoons, the only time when she felt she was half alive, afternoons that had been full of a wild anticipation for weeks before Elizabeth came home and now were the more exciting because she had to plan so desperately to guard them, with Elizabeth hostile to

her and on her track every instant to keep her from her tryst. One half hour she had out of the day, and Elizabeth, she knew as well as if the girl had told her so, was bent on snatching that away from her.

The girl set the little broom carefully in its niche by the fire, and turned to go into the kitchen where deaf Enoch sat by the stove, his stockinged feet on the narrow hearth in front of the oven door. But in the very act of turning she felt too tired to take another step. Her heart was tired, her actual heart beating there in her breast a misery of slow discouragement, and she realised what people must mean when they adjured you to keep your heart up. She dropped into the chair by the fire and stretched out her long legs. Her mother had sat shrinkingly in her own chair, with a queer look of being in the room on sufferance. But now Elizabeth was so still, she glanced stealthily up at her, and her dark eyes widened in a passionate sympathy.

"You're all beat out," she said, and at the concern of her tone Elizabeth stirred with the shudder of a responsive thought in her. It was keen as a knife, and seemed to cut her heart in twain. "How can she seem to be sorry for me," the thought said, "when she could make it all right in a minute, if she would? If she'd only promise me—things couldn't go back and be as they were before all this happened—they're spoiled anyway—but I'd be thankful for even that now." The thoughts kept running through her mind like a pack of hounds, driving her peace before them. She was so tired that presently they grew confused and settled into that dull ache which is like a dream of misery. Who

does not know it who knows the taste of the unfriendliness of life: that feeling of moving forsaken in a desolate dream, battling the air with impotent petitions for waking and finding it still a dream? Her mother, emboldened by this tacit acceptance of her sympathy, was venturing on.

"You ain't goin' over there again? You'll overdo."

Elizabeth pulled herself together.

"I'm going in the morning," she said. "We'll both go."

She rose and went into the kitchen, holding herself erect, as if feeling her mother's eyes upon her and knowing the argumentative value of a straight back. Deaf Enoch, there by the stove, lifted his chin from his breast and made a queer sound, to suggest that he had not been dozing. His cup and plate were still on the table with the remains of his supper, and Elizabeth, getting on her kitchen gait, cleared them away. Enoch watched her drowsily, yet with good will. She was a likely gal, he thought and he was grateful to her as well as to her mother for his good supper. Free-handed they were, nice women, only he wished the widder wouldn't run after that big fireman that joined the express at the Junction for the night run. Big Jim Blaisdell he was, and lived a mile further along, where he might have joined the train except that every fair day he came on his bicycle along a little cross road and waited for the widder, and she never failed him. Once Enoch, not moved by an unfriendly curiosity but thinking he might as well know how things were going with the widder, she seemed such an almighty fool, followed her and mounted a hill not far from the trysting

place where, from a tangle, he could overlook it safely. The whole business was surprisingly commonplace. The only queer thing about it was that the widder went so fast. It seemed as if she were hunting something or was hunted, afraid of not being on time. And when she reached a certain spot, the base of a small hill that hid her from the cross road, she halted and, a good ten minutes after, Big Jim came spinning along on his wheel. He turned in at the opening where there had once been bars, dismounted, laid his bicycle down and strode toward the figure waiting for him. They stood there a moment, talking, Enoch judged, and then, so quickly that he blinked a little, Jim had advanced a step and the woman was in his arms, and they stood there, closely clasped.

Enoch had expected no less, but he was overcome by amazement at her. The courage of her, she that had been her husband's slavish handmaid, busy from morning till night, going nowhere, not even to the shops, and scarcely speaking except as her tyrant asked her this or that about her tasks. And now here she was, not a year after his death, standing in the open daylight in the arms of a married man. Big Jim had evidently not much time for his tryst. He broke away from it as if suddenly remembering how late he was, picked up his bicycle and sped away by the back road. The woman went on her returning track as hurriedly. When Enoch clumped into the kitchen after his chores were done, there she was, at the stove, making milk toast for his supper. Good, too, he found himself saying as he put it down in great mouthfuls, and she turned on him her enquiring glance. Somehow it

seemed incredible that, after the risk of that stolen embrace, she could be there, making milk toast.

The knowledge of her intimacy with the man—not so much knowledge of it perhaps as suspicion—got about the country neighborhood. Men saw Jim riding too often through the back road and wondered why he didn't take the train at the station nearer home. A woman coming back from blueberrying saw the widow flitting across the fields in her stealthy haste. She it was who asked Enoch about it, and he, being uncannily clever in lip-reading, knew at once that the beginning of her sentence "I see the widder Hilliard"—meant a following accusation and didn't wait for it.

"All folderol!" said Enoch, in that flat deaf voice of his. "She's a wanderin' spirit, an' she never had no chance to stir a step in the old man's day. She don't mean no harm."

But strangely it was the widow herself whom he discomfited. To her, he was, though unwittingly, an avenging fate. He was simply too curious to stay in the room without looking at her, from time to time, in his wonder over her audacity. His small eyes, she found, were ever upon her. Sometimes they peered up at her as she approached the stove where he sat, a kitchen dish in her hand, and she felt she must nervously break out on him and ask him what he wanted or even what he guessed. But of her discomfort Enoch was placidly unaware. He hardly knew he was staring, only he did think it was the queerest thing that ever happened in his born days. If it had been the girl now, handsome as a picture and spirit enough in her, you could see, to break a colt! To-night as she came

into the kitchen, he looked up at her and, seeing how changed she was, how wan, it suddenly came to that inner sense which took him on his clever way, that the girl, knowing about it as she did, was being crushed under it. "Christ!" said Enoch, in his dismay, and Elizabeth, who had not understood, turned to him with her enquiring look. But he was busy, getting painfully into his shoes, and she went to the shelf under the clock, took down her Virgil and brought it to the table where she seated herself and drew the lamp toward her. She had resolved not to intermit her scholarly pursuits for even one day; but it was heart-breaking to have no fuller dictionary than the list of words at the back.

VI

When Templeton went into the library to settle down with his wife and daughter by a tidy hearth in a house still breathing out its gratitude in all but audible words, as houses do, for being smoothed into order, he found Sally lying on the sofa, tranquil as the house, and Amy at the table with her everlasting papers. Were her papers, he sometimes wondered, the modern Penelope's web, always to be rendered ineffectual by a night of the world's turning and to be got into shape again for more talks before more women who had such an insatiable greed for what they call current events? He never quarreled with her occupations, even in his most secret mind. If he had any dormant theories of a woman's loyalty to woman's work, he dismissed them promptly on finding Amy had no such conceivable bent. Did she hate the modern equivalent of a housewife's task? very well then, let her take her own chosen way and they'd muddle along as they could in a world which is mostly disorder unless you keep a steady eye on it. Woman's sphere? He couldn't mess about with cut and dried definitions like that. All he knew was that life had an amazing facility for getting out of gear, and all you could do was to supplement other people's jobs if you had to, besides doing your own because you must.

He had rather looked forward to this evening as an experience of the domesticity he got so little of, and now here he was, a bachelor man again, robbed of his women folk and forced to find some plausible occupation of his own to indicate that he didn't mind being alone. Templeton had a bluff sort of indifference to his own deserts and he never wanted to whimper before his women. But now, after the vision of Sally's lovely eyelids down, he tiptoed to the hearth and mended the fire with as little noise as possible, and then sank into his big chair there, the evening paper on his knee. He wondered how he could more effectually remove himself, except by the cruder expedient of leaving the room altogether—and perhaps really breaking into that swooning loveliness of youth: Sally's evening sleep. He had a good many droll wonderments as he sat there, playing 'possum. He wondered if, like gouty squires in old books, he'd better throw the newspaper over his head and sleep, or seem to, and waken Sally with a snore. Or should he venture, since she seemed so very far away from him—even farther than when she was across the water and he did attempt to write her letters that weren't so much love letters as he would have liked but foolish made-up chronicles of home—to break the silence with a remark, put a question to her: "How did you enjoy your stay abroad?" and see if she would stare a minute and giggle the next, and tell him what an idiotic old parent he was. He couldn't say. He knew too little of this Sally, out of her childish pinafores. But Amy, who was writing with her back to her and ignorant that she was asleep at all, was the one to do it. Her grave, absorbed voice broke on the

stillness so suddenly that it made Templeton jump in his chair.

"Sally," said Sally's mother, "I begin to think you'd better write."

Then Sally did move. She opened her eyes, with a lovely effect of lifting lashes, and said, in a voice Templeton thought enchanting, it was so mumbly with sleep:

"Who to?"

"Don't say who," counselled Amy, always the informative mother. "Whom. But I don't mean that. Stories. Books."

At that Sally came slowly to an upright posture, like a long-stemmed flower after drinking, and having reassumed the burden of life merely said: "Oh!" But as her perception of things actual returned, the enormity of the proposal came over her and she remarked, now in a waking voice: "Books? I can't."

"Oh, yes, you can," said Amy, unmoved. "Anybody can nowadays. Ask your father."

"Yes," said he sadly, "she's right. Anybody can. Those of them that haven't already." And he was cheered by finding that Sally understood.

Now Amy rose, pushed back her chair and went to the front door to breathe. She did this once or twice in the course of an evening's bout of work: six long breaths, and then a return to the course of world events. Sally addressed her father in a cautious tone betraying that perhaps she hadn't been so sound asleep after all. Perhaps she had only been wilfully removed, bored by him and mother.

"Do you," said she, "pray for mother?"

Templeton stared at her in a frank surprise.

"Good Lord, no!" said he. "What should I do that for?"

"She has such a horrid time," said Sally, apparently much concerned. "Tying herself all up into knots, the way she does, and chasing round after events. *I* should die."

"Do you," Templeton enquired, approaching it timorously, "pray a good deal?"

"Oh, yes," said Sally, as if it were vitamines or a system of gymnastics. "I have for quite a long time."

"Do you think," said Templeton, more and more humble before her, "you get—results?"

"Oh, no," said Sally, "I guess not. Not what you'd call results. I never keep tabs on it that way. Only I like to play there's something nicer—more fun, you know—than the johnnies we have to talk to, and so I talk to the other johnnies we don't see."

Did she include her Creator in this eccentric term, or did she mean His saints? Templeton dared not ask. Yet he had to know more about this.

"Do you," he ventured, with an augmented caution, "pray for your mother?"

She nodded, and he felt emboldened to go on.

"What do you pray?"

"Oh," said Sally, "just ask 'em to send her somebody to give her a lift, you know, stop her drying up into—well, I don't know—the kind of thing she will dry up into if she keeps on doing dull things."

"Well," said Templeton insatiably, "that's interesting news. Do you pray for yourself?"

"Heavens, yes!" said Sally. "First of all."

"What do you pray."

She said nothing. Perhaps she couldn't tell.

"Make me a good girl?" he prompted.

She was ready enough for that.

"Oh, dear, no."

"Give me a dozen silk stockings?"

She shook her head, and a laugh ran into her eyes.

"It isn't things," said Sally. "It's asking them to come and stay with me a minute. You know."

He did not.

"Saints?" he enquired.

"No, I guess not."

"Angels?"

"They'd be nice, wouldn't they?" said she, but did not commit herself further.

Templeton wanted very much to know if she prayed for him, but he couldn't manage it. Really, he felt he could hardly bear it if she said no. And at this minute, Amy, a little pinker from her inhalations, returned to the table and sat down again to her work, and Sally and her father, encountering each other's gaze, hers quite composed and his round-eyed with curiosity, burst into delighted laughter.

"What is it?" Amy enquired, but without looking up, and as they didn't at once tell her, she straightway forgot them.

But Templeton couldn't entirely control his curiosity, and after a sufficient interval, to be sure his wife was at least in Czecko-Slovakia, he telegraphed Sally the one word: "Pray."

She understood. The elucidation wasn't to continue.

"Oh, I just put it that way to you," she said, knowing her mother wouldn't hear. "That's the only word I could think of. But it isn't that, really. I just think to them. It's conversation. No, maybe it isn't, because it's all on one side. But I'm perfectly sure they're there."

This troubled Templeton. It troubled him after she and her mother had gone sleepily upstairs. Was she seeing spooks? He remembered she had been one of the children who imagine an unseen playmate. Her mother had known that and put it by as catalogued psychologically, but of late years there had been no mention of it. He wondered if Sally had been conscious of a certain lonesomeness, like the gnawing undercurrent of his own life, which he ascribed to untoward circumstance, chiefly his own stupidity in failing to map out his course. He had just taken it from day to day. That, he realised, was what the mental waster, the prodigal did, and when the years came that had no pleasure in them, could not help wishing he had honey of some sort laid up in a hollow tree. Then he mended the fire and stretched his legs further toward it, and thought, with a luxuriousness he meant to taste to the full, of his beautiful scheme, his secret solace of anticipation: the mountains of Spain. No one could take that away from him. And as he thought, finally drowsing off, some one ran up the porch steps and the front door opened. It was Pat. He threw down his hat in the hall and came in upon Templeton, who did not stir, but looked up at him pleasantly.

"Thought you'd gone to town," said he.

"No," said Pat, making for the sofa and stretching

himself out. "I blew in on the Calverts. They asked me to dine."

"Aren't you a great one for getting to know everybody?" said Templeton lazily. "They've been here off and on for a year while the house was building, and I don't know 'em from Adam. Where'd you meet 'em?"

"In the house," said Pat. "I rang the bell and they asked me in. Dinner followed, as a matter of course."

"You're a funny dog," said Templeton, "cadging for meals. You always did. When you were a little chap, if you were hungry you just went into the nearest house and said so."

"Oh, well!" said Pat. It still seemed to him the obvious thing to do. "People don't mind. It pleases 'em."

They stared at the fire and their thoughts went travelling.

"I don't see many of your stories, now," said Pat, at length.

"No," said Templeton. "Didn't know you ever saw 'em."

"Oh, yes, I keep track of things."

"Well, you won't have to any more," said Templeton, enjoying the announcement because it meant, "I'm going to Spain."

"Written out?"

"I guess so. Anyway, I've stopped."

"The trouble with you is," said Pat, not as if it mattered much, "you haven't kept up with the times."

No, Templeton agreed, he hadn't. He didn't add that there was a certain clangor about the times which did not so much deafen as confuse him.

"The real trouble is, you know," said Pat, "there's a different language now, and you refuse to learn it. Your book reviews are rotten, old man, simply rotten. I wonder they tolerate you."

They wouldn't, his brother might have assured him, save that they had a certain inexplicable feeling for him, "affection mingled with contempt."

"For example," Pat continued, informing him out of his own experience, "you do your reviews with reference to certain accepted standards. That is, you think they're still accepted. But they're not. They've gone into the discard."

"Is that what's the matter?" enquired Templeton, from his cloud of smoke.

"It isn't anything that's the matter. It's inevitable. Times have changed, old Rip Van Winkle. Wake up and rub your eyes. Times have changed and books have changed, but there aren't any new adjectives. You've got to go on sticking the same old ones on the new stuff we're doing. You think the Victorians were 'great,' and so you won't desecrate the word for the little boys playing round your knee. But come off! come down the ages and put off your white samite and be one of us."

"You aren't such a very little white-haired boy yourself," said Templeton, "and I'm not so much more of a Victorian than you are, in point of time." He was reconciled to being a back number, but, if there was one thing he did disbelieve in, it was his brother's agile shifting with the times. "Literature isn't a business."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Patrick. "It's worse. It's the big drum. It's virtually saying: 'Come look at me while I lecture to you and read my works. Buy the papers and find out what I have for dinner.' If it isn't business, then oil isn't and steel isn't and copper isn't. Now let's be practical. If you're going to take your little pail and mop up the Atlantic, and quarrel with your bread and butter, what are you going to do for eats?"

Templeton went on smoking and thinking. What was he going to do? Should he tell Pat, the last person to tell, within his immediate radius, the very last, next to Amy? But he felt, in a way, determined, bent, as he never remembered being, on straightening out his own line of life. And wilfully, perhaps for the very luxury of talking, he spoke.

"I'll tell you," he said, "what I'd like to do. I'd like to write what you might, if you were conventional, call a religious book. A perfectly honest book, as honest as Rousseau or Cellini. A man's life as the man himself sees it. How the world seems to him."

Then he glanced at Pat and caught the look he used inwardly to call his brother's memorising look: it came when Pat was putting down data for future use. He thought he knew all Pat's ways, which seemed not to have changed very much, knew how to elude and toss a ribald farewell to them as he fled. His own face crinkled up into the delightful smile Sally was, perhaps, the only one to love.

"God bless you," he said, "don't you see I'm only

pulling your leg? That would be a great old stunt, but it's not the thing I mean to do."

Pat smiled, and was patient. Jack, he thought, would probably end by telling him, and if the old boy had a good idea he could most certainly put him up to getting it into marketable shape.

VIII

Elizabeth was sadly conscious of being a prig, her spiritual values wrong beyond all possibility of change. Other daughters of families, far more lowly placed, warmly loved father and mother and rejoiced in the atmosphere of home. This seemed to her both decent and humanly picturesque, but she could not emulate it. Her mind on books, she had always been straining to get somewhere, the old squalid beginnings left behind her and, if it might be, forgotten. Yet she found nothing praiseworthy in this, though, in moments of spiritual weariness, she did sometimes justify herself by owning to her savage soul that nobody could have loved her father. He had put everything in him into the land and finished every day so tired that he met the night as mindless as the halted machine. Not wilfully unkind, he was brutish in his indifference to her mother and herself, except as part of the agencies that kept the farm alive. His wife might look strained and haggard after the long day of tasks colossal in their weight and variety, but he did not see it. His own eyelids were dropping under a like inhuman strain.

Elizabeth, looking back on her mother, found her a monument of silence, though, in a remoter past, she had been different, breaking forth in impetuous affection, motherly cuddlings and murmured words. But

all that had ceased when the child grew more studious, always, her mother once told her jealously, with a book in her hand; and as the race for advancement grew hotter, she became still more remote. She did not withdraw herself of her own will, but as she found herself changing, her mother seemed, like her father, to live in another room in the house of life, and she could no more escape from it than Elizabeth could force her own way in and live there with her.

Elizabeth could only believe that the varying degrees of social excellence were determined by the will of God. He had called her, by reason of her ambition, to an uneasy abode with the intellectuals. Her mother could not possibly have entered those enchanting courts. She had no wedding garment, and even if Elizabeth had furbished up something for her, the guardians of the portal would have put her courteously aside. Then, at last, this young Minerva accomplished the feat of making a break herself, and home was, incredibly, behind her. But she had a savage sense of unwilling duty and, after her father died, visited her mother often and gave her money for comforts the house itself looked uneasy at entertaining. She proposed several schemes for her mother's betterment: one that she should sell the farm to the Calverts, and live with a sister in a neighboring town. But Eunice seemed terrified at the thought of leaving the place she had grown into, and said she guessed she and Enoch better be let alone to do the best they could. Elizabeth was relieved, and ashamed of her relief, and presently an unsigned, illiterate note reached her, saying she'd better come home

and tend to her mother. Mrs. Hilliard was carrying on with a married man that worked on the railroad. It never occured to her to doubt the evidence of the disorderly note, it seemed to fit so perfectly into her untidy life, nor did she, even in her own mind, attempt to trace the sender. The note itself was so horrible to her that she could not bear to know, and Enoch seemed so far from any knowledge of paper and pencil that she did not think of him. She accepted it, resigned from her position and descended upon her mother, stern, silent, admirable in every particular, and said she had come home to live. Her mother was so amazed at the sight of her that she seemed aghast. If the evidence of the note were true, Elizabeth angrily reflected, she might well be aghast. There would be somebody at hand now to whom her goings and comings would be open.

Enoch had greeted her as he always did, on her homecomings, with an arid civility that meant, she knew, good will unflavored by personal interest; but he got off by himself as soon as might be and made faces at out-door nature because he had to express himself somehow, his terrified relief, his amazement that he, with his stubby pencil and a sheet of paper bought at the store for a cent, had been able to summon such an all-powerful visitant. Thereupon he silently gave the case into Elizabeth's hands. He had found out all that concerned him to know. Spying, as spying, did not interest him. If Elizabeth couldn't do anything, nobody could. They were awful nice women, both of 'em, with a cool hand at butter and a light one for pie-crust, but they'd have to look out for this thing

themselves. It was his business to tend to the stock.

If Elizabeth had had, at this point in her life, more than an embryo sense of humor, she must have laughed wildly to see how the greater sacrifice of her coming affected her mother, the astonishment, the frank dismay. In these years of her growing up, she had been finding legitimate reason for not coming, and now that she had broken her life in two to defend her mother against inconceivable disaster, she was only a hindrance, if not a misery. Again she had a vision of the sort of daughter she should have been; she knew perfectly well what the paragon would have done. She would, in conformity with household magazines, transform the house into a bower of prettiness, and so enchant her mother that she would repudiate the idea of illicit wandering. But the whole system of sentimental alleviations seemed to her sickening. All she wanted, now that she had come, was to defend her mother in martial, drastic ways, such as forbidding her to leave the house, if that were of any use, and then herself sitting down to her Latin, which was her chief concern and ought to be her mother's for her.

The second day of their work for the Templetons passed without incident. Mrs. Hilliard seemed to have fallen meekly into the scheme. They came across the fields together, after doing their own early chores, and stepped about in a silent harmony, getting the other house in order; and after Mrs. Hilliard had helped plan the dinner, she said she would go back and get Enoch his. Perhaps she'd run over again about four and stay an hour, fixing the vegetables and getting

things so Elizabeth could set them on the table without much trouble. There would be Enoch's supper then. This seemed reasonable to Elizabeth, and she knew, by her past uneasy watching, that she had nothing to fear until the late afternoon. At first, Eunice and Blaisdell had met in the morning, at the end of his run, but evidently that became too dangerous, with a watchful daughter at hand. Once Elizabeth had herself met Big Jim on his bicycle, riding along the back road. He had glanced at her and put on speed, and, though she would not look behind her, she knew he turned in at the pasture bars where her mother awaited him. This was the man, this the blond face she had seen before on some of her brief visits home, but never with the premonition of its power to rouse such hatred in her. She had a wild impulse to run after him and come upon them at their guilty meeting, but she could not. A shame as great as her anger held her back. She might have been feeling the righteous emotion of her father, his revolt against the invasion of his rights. But she knew that was not it. She had no partisanship for her father as her father. It was simply that this was her mother who was smearing common decency by a bestial intercourse, and she felt the hot anger of the wronged.

When she had put Red House in order, she went home and found her mother and Enoch ready to sit down to their meal in the kitchen. It was one of Eunice Hilliard's understanding ways, the perfectness of the mechanism her husband had set up in her, that she tossed off an abundance of the most inviting food, though she herself was the kind of woman who, as

Enoch though wonderingly, only picked a little. No more than a bird, he often reflected, no more than a bird did she eat, and look at the work she'd turn off, as if she was all the time thinkin' about somethin' else. When these three ate together, they were usually rather silent, but to-day more than ever so. As the meal ended, Elizabeth looked her mother full in the face, not averting her glance, as she had lately lest Eunice should find reprobation in it, but deliberately; and seeing those dangerously lighted eyes, she felt a sudden sick distrust of her. Somehow, having planned the day to keep her too busy to wander, she had had a foolish belief that her mother also had acquiesced. But suddenly she felt she had lost her. Something stronger than she was drawing her away. Whatever toils she wove about those straying feet, the spell was powerful enough to break them all.

That afternoon she found an hour for study. When she went back to the Templetons' it was with her Virgil under her arm, and, having revived the kitchen fire to an appropriate life for broiling, she sat down at the table and began to con the difficult page. But something was tempting her, the library, very beautiful it seemed to her, from the dark old furniture and the careless profusion of books. She had no business in there except to dust or lay the fire, and this was already done; but temptation set upon her. In a library like that, there must be a Latin lexicon. Book in hand she was at the library door and stopped, rebuffed by the crackling of the flame. Somebody was at home. As she was about turning noiselessly away Pat, at the table, looked up and saw her.

"Hullo," said he. "Come in."

He got up, looking at her with an amiable interest. Elizabeth returned the look gravely. She had no feminine airs, however artfully disguised, no secret flurry of understanding, with men. It seemed to her, when she was forced to whip up a temporary acceptance of their eccentricities, that there was a disconcerting side to them, a bold side, she put it, though this need only concern wives, often to be darkly pitied. If these amorous freebooters forced their hateful propensities on other women, they were bad. Certain experiences of her own confirmed this. There were hands in the boarding-house where she worked who egged each other on to pay her compliments, and it seemed to her she could die of shame because she believed they laughed at her in private, her shyness, her proud reserve, and this was their way of making fun of her. When one of them, her employer, "a little started" with liquor, tried to kiss her, she had, as Templeton had heard, struck him, and, being a fair-minded creature, she grew hot remembering it and wondered if she had been too quick. Why not have pushed him off his unsteady legs and merely walked away? As it was, she had to remember the feel of his rough cheek on her palm, as if she had been the one to take the punishment.

"Handsome girl," Pat was thinking. "Can't be a caller. Still, not one of the family."

Elizabeth was begging his pardon. She might have vanished discreetly, but instead she was, according to her stiff little code, lingering to tell him the exact truth.

"I do the work," said she, with an accuracy that amused him. "I came in to see if there was a Latin lexicon."

Pat understood: the good apprentice, not lying before the fire and conning the lives of great men by flaming pine knots, but scavenging crumbs of literature while she waited for the pot to boil. With the zeal of a man who has no interest but in lexicons, he began to hunt for one.

"Must be somewhere," said he. "You take that shelf and I'll take these."

They hunted together, but vainly: there was no lexicon. And when the shelves ended and they came together at the corner of the room, he took her Virgil from her and opened at the mark.

"This is dreary stuff," said he. "You can't be reading it for fun."

"Not exactly," said Elizabeth. "I teach."

"Worse and worse," said Pat, looking up from the page with the smile that was pleasing to women. "That's the dreariest of all."

Elizabeth did not smile back at him. Not so could she deny the gods of her intellectual life. Was it not Latin? She could not think why he looked so impishly amused.

"Come along," said he. "Sit down here at the table and I'll translate."

He drew up a chair and Elizabeth saw nothing to do but take it. He seated himself beside her and began, reading the lines aloud in a modulated voice, scanning deliciously in most poetical words. She caught the beat of the rhythm and her brain thrilled with it. So this

was what it would be to translate poetry, not go stumbling over it, a word at a time, digging up meanings like clods of earth. She was in pursuit of the intellectual life and lo! she had not lived. She went skimming along with him like Atalanta o'er the unbending corn, and, of a sudden, just as Atalanta might have encountered a current of cold air or an unfriendly fog, she saw what he was doing. He was taking her a wonderful flight of metres and rhyme, but he wasn't translating at all. Elizabeth gave a little cry. She forgot he was a strange gentleman and put a hand on his arm. She wondered afterward if she shook him.

"That isn't the Latin," she cried. "There isn't one single word you've said that's in the book. You've"—her breath failed her at the vastness of his dishonesty —"you've made it all up."

Pat lay back in his chair and hooted, in a queer high laughter like the cackle of a bird. He was chaffing her:

"How long did you expect me to go on, before you found it out? You *are* a ninny! You didn't suppose I remember this kind of thing, a man of my age? I couldn't translate a line of it, to save my skin."

Elizabeth pushed back her chair and took her book. She was repudiating him, but his mock repentant face was too much for her and she began to laugh, and looked, he felt, very much like a girl and not an angry Muse. Then Templeton appeared in the doorway, enquiring:

"What's the joke?"

Elizabeth was stricken with the enormity of being there at all, she, the help. She rose, her prim self again,

and he smiled at her as she passed. She needn't think he objected to the sound of laughter, especially in this reconstructed house. He was glad enough not to find himself in a silent barracks of a place with the fire to build and his own makeshifts at food.

"Chops on the kitchen table," he called after her, as if he too wanted his share in a merry round. "Et settry."

He sat down by the fire and felt the luxury of coming home. Pat was still smiling over his own excellent fooling, and told the tale of it.

"You always had a hand at rhythm and easy rhyme," said Templeton, smiling over it. He looked into the fire and thought. "Wants a lexicon, does she?" said he. "If there's one at the office, I could bring it out."

There was none at the office and he knew it, but he did bring one out next night with an affectation of carelessness and told her she could keep it as long as she liked. Elizabeth took it from him with both hands, adoringly, as if it were a sybilline book, and disappeared with it into her kitchen.

VIII

Presently Amy and Sally were home again, coming on the train after Templeton. He looked at his wife curiously, when both women halted at the library door for a moment before taking off their coats. Amy seemed very much alive, her eyes brighter, the color in her cheeks. He wondered if having Sally at hand to talk to in the language women love might have stirred her temperate blood. Ah, but could she also have begun to mould Sally into the sort of public prodigy she herself found so admirable? that was to be thought of twice. And as if Sally passed him over the key to it, in a languid hand, he noted that, after the rose flush of her smiling entrance, she disclosed a jaded pallor, as if this had been a hard day with no pleasure in it. "What the deuce!" he said to himself, as they mounted the stairs and he got up to stir the fire. Sally, hearing his voice, came back and asked if he spoke. He shook his head at her, with a little rueful smile, for he was really amending his comment for his own benefit: "Why the deuce didn't you stay abroad, when you were once there?"

Later, they were called in to dinner and he went out to it with a new and surprising recognition, that this most sustaining thing on earth, the continuity of family life, was being maintained in his own house and he was, even if temporarily, soothed and rested by it.

That was it, he reflected, as they sat there while Elizabeth deftly removed plates, and Pat and Amy, he with a fictitious interest suited to the social hour and she intensely earnest, discussed English politics; an entire universe might menace your individual life, you had no more security for this world or the hypothetical next than a land bird blown out to sea, but, if this quiet routine continued from kitchen to chamber, you preserved a surface confidence that kept you going. Sally was not talking much. She looked mentally removed, and he wondered suddenly if she had taken refuge with her invisible constituency. She caught his glance and smiled all over her face, in that way she had.

"Spooks?" she enquired of him, as if she flipped the word like a crumb of bread. "No! saints and angels though."

When they left the table Amy, with a word about the night and stars, put a hand on his arm and drew him to the front door. In the manner of husbands who have learned the signal code down to lifted eyebrow and tap of foot, he gathered she had something to break to him. He opened the door for her and they stepped out into the unseasonably soft air, and halted on the porch with no pretense at reading the heavens but finding themselves very much on earth. Amy spoke hurriedly, and with a decision sharpened by her haste.

"He has been over to call on the Calverts."

"Pat?" said Templeton. "Oh, yes, he told me so."

"And you allowed it!" said she, in the tone that meant not so much annoyance with him as a despair at finding fortunate combinations so hard to compass.

"Why, bless you," said Templeton, whom she could

still surprise, "I couldn't have helped it. I didn't know he was going. No, I shouldn't have interfered. Why should I?"

She shifted her ground.

"It isn't decent," she said, "for you not to have called. And here he comes and cuts in at once and stays to dinner and—you know his way. By this time they're as thick as thieves."

"Oh, no," said Templeton consolingly. "They can't have got very thick. It was only yesterday."

"Well," said Amy, with the decision marking her perfected plans. "You must call to-night."

Templeton caught at the first excuse possible.

"Couldn't, dear. Couldn't possibly. I might butt in on a dinner myself."

"They're not giving dinners," said she. "I told you so before. There's only he and the son, and the son's queer, gassed or something, or shell shock. They're not the sort to dine."

But he had been searching about for further argument. The least would do, the most unworthy.

"Well, I haven't dressed for dinner myself," said he, in his tone of honeyed conciliation. "You don't want them to think——"

The result was really worse than he expected. She cut in upon him:

"Run up now and change."

His very being rose in revolt: the being that had just been reclining upon the security of family peace.

"I'll be hanged if I will," said Templeton, and then, as he looked forward into the vista of a shattered eve-

ning, he ended weakly, "Oh, well then! I'll do it, but I tell you plainly I won't dress."

She laid a wifely hand on his arm, and he gathered that his sacrifice had been accepted.

"You'd better not go into the library again," she recommended. "If you get talking, you never'll start."

He found himself, apparently by no will of his own, seeking his hat in the hall while her voice—a nasty note of triumph in it, he told himself unjustly—was going on in the library about the British dole. As he shut himself out from household peace and turned toward the orchard whence a path led across the fields to Calvert House, he swore richly and thought of Spain. And he succinctly stated to his revolting inner being that he would not go to the Calverts' after all. She might think she could make him, but she couldn't. He would perhaps chuck a card under the door sometime, and then he would lie to her like the sneak he had become and say that, gas or no gas, shell shock or no shell shock, he hadn't found them. And having thus highly resolved, his rage ebbed slightly and he looked up at the stars he and Amy had tacitly ignored because they seemed to have no influence on their particular complications and decided it was of no use to spoil a perfect night by grousing. This was a part of Dear Old Templeton that had earned him the affection of men. He could never help leaving the door open for the beguiling things to slip in after the ogres had been there to ruin the show. Perhaps that was what the ogres were for. Perhaps they were sent to gut the house of life and sweep it with the wind of their rage, and after that they had to clear out and

leave it to be refurnished. But bare as it was, it made a very pretty dance hall. At that he laughed out, and somebody who had been lightly flying after him slipped a hand through his arm and enquired:

"What are you laughing at?"

It was Sally, nothing on her head, nothing on her shoulders, and the prudent father stopped and exclaimed, in the words of all older generations:

"You'll get your death of cold."

"You mustn't say it that way," said Sally, impelling him along, by one or two dancing steps of her own. "It's 'death-a-cold,' not 'of.' Where's she sending you?"

It was not the Sally who had sat dumb at dinner, and instantly this began to seem to Templeton a prodigious lark.

"Over to call on the Calverts," said he. "But I'm not going. Now you've come, we'll run down and listen to Bass Brook, and then we'll cut back home. Here, I'm going to put my coat on you."

"No, you're not," said Sally. A less nice daughter, he knew, would have referred to her own immunity from rheumatism and his corresponding grogginess. "You can put your arm around my neck. No, my darling, you're going to call on the Calverts and I'm going with you."

Were they, he wondered, going to call on the Calverts? It looked very much like it. And did all men court the dominion of some woman or another, escaping a wife only to fall under the sway of a daughter, or was it only ineffectual liars like him? There was nothing for it but straightway to besiege the Calverts.

They turned off at a path he knew, and when it led them to the stone wall, found it was bringing them into a débris of building material in the Calvert grounds, rubbish not yet cleared away. Sally left his arm and seemed to float over obstructions like a white moth, and to Templeton calling on the Calverts began to look like an exhilarating adventure in his colorless life. They came up the slope at the side of the house and went round to the pillared front, austere in the moonlight. The white moth came to his side now and mounted the steps by him, and Templeton rang the bell.

"I think you ought to have knocked," said Sally, putting a forefinger on the great brass knocker.

"What for," said Templeton, "when there's a bell?"

"Oh, because," said Sally, and seemed inclined to leave it at that, adding, just as the door came open, "I've an idea it's meant to be a knocker house."

Mr. Calvert was at home, Ormond, the military looking in-door man, apprised them. Yes, sir, dinner was over. And in the instant of his turning to usher them into what seemed to be a drawing-room on the left, they had time to be impressed by the rightness of the hall, an effect of harmonious proportions, an emptiness that was beauty, before a figure appeared in the doorway of the room at the right, the figure of a slim man, less than the ordinary stature. As he stood there against the background of the beautiful room, their eyes approved him, a man of perhaps sixty and yet with the marks of an older wisdom on his anxious forehead and about his eyes. The pale face was shaven, the mouth compressed as if on words it had long ago

been taught the unwisdom of uttering, and the stiff white hair stood up straight above a forehead perhaps too capacious for the lower face. It had a diminishing effect on the chin, which was not of itself small: only sensitive, perhaps. He was an exquisitely cared-for little old gentleman. Somebody was at pains to brush and groom him or he anxiously devoted himself to it, having a doubt, as Sally decided, of his own fitness for an ornamental or censorious world. He was, she found instantly, a darling.

"Come in here," he was saying. "This is very good of you. No, no, you needn't tell me who you are. You are Mr. Templeton, the author, and this——"

"My daughter, Sabrina, widely known as Sally," said Templeton, feeling a slight fulness of the chest at the word "author." He had been so long wondering how much of an author he really was that it disturbed him slightly to be accepted without hesitation. Stephen Calvert was an exceedingly dignified little figure, so that the story-teller might well shrink from referring to him by the untitled surname, though in the ease essential to narration, it has to be done. (A man once said of him: "No, he never seems a little fellow. He looks like a big man seen a long way off.") So Calvert, or Old Stephen, as he was known on the mercantile side, waved them into the library, seeming to eliminate the serving man with the same unstudied intent, and giving Sally, who was prone to jumping at reasons, the impression of hating personal service, wishing he could eat from the air and never find one of "those fellows" near him again. Presently he had them before the great log fire—if there was anything ostentatious about

the house it was its fireplaces—and was looking at them benevolently.

"Now this," said he, "is capital. Your brother came in last night."

"Yes," said Templeton. "He's really the author."

"No," said Calvert, with no attempt to soften it by even a deprecating smile. "I haven't read anything of his, but Champ says he isn't. I rely on Champ."

"Champ?" Templeton enquired. He had not forgotten, but the lubricating preliminaries to conversation had to go on.

"My son, Champney. He knows all about the moderns, though it's the ancients he spends his time on. He'd like to rebuild London. Yes, he's got that into his head. He has, indeed."

This, Templeton reflected, was a mad little old man. Rebuild London! And yet why not? They were reported to have millions, and what could they do better than propping up the centuries?

"He lives in the past," said Calvert gravely. Sally concluded that the father saw the world itself now through the eyes of his son. "That's why we came out here and bought all this land. He got the idea, you see, that he wanted to build a little London. He says the old one's disappearing. He says it'll go all the faster now the world is changing. He says there won't be anything of Old London left. Or the Parthenon. Greece, you know. One time, he thought of that."

"I see," said Sally suddenly, as if the idea jumped out of her head and gave a small explosion in the air. "What fun! a little city. There's the river, too. That'll

be the Thames. But it's too tiny. The ships can't come in, full of cinnamon and nutmeg. And gold, too, when they'd had a scrap with Spain."

"You needn't laugh," said a voice from the doorway behind them. Templeton and Sally turned in their chairs. Undoubtedly this was Champ. He had come softly, too softly unless you forgave him for the frank desire of finding out who was there before deciding to be seen. A man, young, with broad shoulders and a dark vivid face: the features were large, the hair thick and straight and the mouth shut in a way to intensify what seemed to be a permanent scowl, for there were lines over the handsome nose. A dark, sulky face, Sally thought, the girl in her at once possessed to break it up into a smile. He came forward and Calvert said, with that fondness one loved in him because it evidently counted on sympathy:

"Yes, this is my boy. These are the Templetons, Champ. The Red House, you know."

Champ stood with his hands in his pockets, very uncivil, Sally thought, to a girl who managed her hair so skilfully. But he was looking at her, perhaps because she had been the last to speak.

"We're not laughing," said Sally indulgently. She wanted to add that though she might see an opportunity of laughing at him, in his sulks, his father was a very different sort of person. Besides she liked him —Old Stephen.

"Take them upstairs, Champ," said Old Stephen, "and show them your plans. I'm pretty sure he's got some," he added, rather wistfully, "though I haven't seen 'em yet. The theatre's all I've seen. No,

you leave Mr. Templeton here with me, but you take the young lady up and show her round. He's got a nice work-room," he added, to Sally. "Seems if he could do 'most anything he liked in a work-room like that."

"Care to go up?" asked Champ.

He looked at Templeton in a civil but indifferent enquiry, and it was Calvert who answered.

"No, you two run along. We'll stay here."

When they had gone, he turned to Templeton still with that engaging air of expecting a sympathetic agreement. "I couldn't resist it," he said. "Sending them off together. Two young things, you know, and Champ doesn't see anybody of his own age to speak of,—that is, not now. He's different. Been different since the war. You see that, don't you?"

"I never really saw him before," said Templeton.

"Oh, I forgot. I can't get it out of my head everybody knows Champ. Well, he is different, that's all."

"Shell shock?" asked Templeton, resorting awkwardly to the words Amy had put into his mouth.

"No. That is, he says not. Says he's just changed, that's all there is to it. Won't talk about it unless he sees it's keeping me awake nights, and then all he says is he's found out the world's different from what we told him—the books and all—and he doesn't feel right in it."

"Doesn't feel adjusted?"

"That's it. Does it occur to you," said Calvert leaning a little closer and speaking with a confidential earnestness, "that these young folks now have an awful thing put on 'em?"

"Just what?" asked Templeton. But he laughed a little. "I haven't noticed they're shirking their responsibilities to any great extent." He thought of the young he knew in ink, nonchalantly prepared at every point to "tell the world."

"Ah, that's it," said Calvert. "They don't know it, but it's an awful thing, just the same. The earth has opened and let 'em down with the rest of us into a great crack that goes deeper than they know, and they've had to find out what human nature is. They've had to see the nations as they are—every man for himself. And they're not old enough. It's come on us gradually. But it's come on them like a shock."

"Don't you worry," said Templeton. "They aren't shocked. If they are, they don't know it. They just think it's a matter of poor planning, and now they've got the reins they'll do better, and they won't find out they haven't made good themselves till they're old enough to die, like us."

"Oh, yes," said Calvert, with a kind of childlike solemnity, "they're shocked. That's why some of 'em act so. They don't know why, but it's shock. Don't I know? I've had occasion to, for there's Champ." From which Templeton drew the practical conclusion that Champ wasn't easy to live with. "You see things were hard for him from the first," Calvert went on. "There was his mother. She'd always been delicate, and when Champ went over—he went in 1915—she didn't want him to go. That is, she did and she didn't. She saw 'twas right, and she didn't try to hold him back, but he knew pretty well how she felt. And before he came back, she——"

Templeton inwardly supplied it: she died.

"Hard lines," said he.

"That's what I say," said Calvert. "That's why I shouldn't expect Champ to be what he was before, and why I'm as tickled as a child if I can whip him up to take an interest in anybody of his own age. You tell that nice girl of yours I'm much obliged to her. But there! he says I talk to folks about him. I mustn't. I'm an old fool. I do run on."

IX

CHAMP'S work-room, the story over the eastern wing, was a beautiful spot with a suggestion of remoteness hard to be attained except in the top of a tree: something the birds know about and men only copy. Champ had inarticulate longings. He wanted space, with its rarer beauties, and, humbly knowing his own vaporings for what they were, the mere hungers of a man's mind, handed them over to the architect and begged him to do what he could with them. The room was to belong to the air and the sky and, like a tree, serve as nesting-place for shy secrecies. The architect understood perfectly. He had his own dream of such a room. There were oak beams overhead. They were as brown as age, because a patient manual artifice had made them so; but Champ had a fancy that their actual newness spoke to the mind if not the eye. Perhaps it had a pleasant smell, one of those intimations one gets, of new things about to spring from the remembered past. It had a bareness, too, that was delightful, and not austere. What a place to work! so Sally thought. There was nothing reminiscent about it. There were no ghosts, as in rooms where generations have lived and left their griefs and longings like a cobweb-arras on the walls, to smother you. But she had no time to spin more than a thread of her own, to begin another arras out of her expecta-

tions, or to wonder how he had the courage to furnish it so sparsely with the long work-table and heavy chairs. A good deal of richness did lie in the books along the walls, but these he evidently did not mean to force on her. She was used to the ardor of collectors in its naïve phases: a first edition passed over to you with anxiety, lest you commit some heavy-handed injury, and then, when you have given it back with an appropriate tenderness, a tale of having run it to earth, to the discomfiture of yearning rivals. Champ's mind was evidently not on books. He drew out one of the heavy chairs from the table and, when she had seated herself, sat down where he could look at her fully, though it was not until his first question that she suspected him of wanting to place her, from his own angle of view, before turning over his play-things to her. It was exactly like that. They had been sent off, boy and girl, to amuse each other, and Old London seemed to be the game. She fancied the pile of papers between them represented his work or play. He laid one hand on them, a fine hand, she thought, strong and sensitive.

"How much do you know about Old London?" he asked, and she answered without palliation:

"Nothing."

He still considered her. She wondered whether the look said: "Then you're up here on false pretences." But that did not trouble her. Sally was too pleased with the atmosphere of the room. She lay back in her chair in idle enjoyment of the tapping of a branch against the window.

"That must be very tall," she said, "that tree."

"Yes," said he. "The branches are nice against the sky. Well?" he pushed his papers away. "What do you want to know about Old London?"

"Anything you can tell me in ten minutes," said Sally pleasantly. "My mind is open."

She expected him to smile civilly, at least, but he was leaning back in his chair, one hand drumming the table, and the look he turned on her seemed to touch her only because she was there. He hadn't anything to say to her, Sally concluded and not very much about Old London. He was a frowning young man, only cursorily polite. But he was not self-conscious. If he had to be rude, mysteriously had to be, he was not finding it a virtue. He ceased his nervous drumming and surprisingly smiled at her. A handsome young man, she thought then, an unaccountable creature, capable of charming if you happened to lie in the track of his favor. Plainly he debated something and made up his mind.

"Old London," said he, "is a pipe dream, that's all. In the beginning it was a mild sort of joke, but my father took it for gospel. He fidgets when I have the jumps."

"I know," said Sally gravely. "They do," it implied, "our predecessors, those too serious forerunners on our path of life."

(And yet she knew what she thought of such predecessors. She had a quite outmoded love for them. Only she was getting under Champ's armor now, and to do that, being as modern as she could, because she

knew what wares are warranted to sell. Sally had a good deal of the minx in her.)

"What are your jumps?" she enquired sympathetically. "I wonder if they're anything like mine."

His face went dark again. Somehow, it became evident, the reply had been unsatisfactory. She sat up in her chair and tuned herself up to saying, if not what was demanded of her, at least what would lighten that unbecoming frown. He had the sensitiveness of disordered nerves. But she found it unnecessary to untangle him. He was doing it himself.

"I didn't bring you up here to talk about Old London."

"Didn't you?" said Sally pleasantly. "This room is nice. I can tell your father how much I liked it."

"You think you've got to tell him something," he rejoined. "You've seen what a devil of a state he's in about me. Encourage it, will you? Let him have a name to call it by. Shell shock's as good as any. Really, you know, I'm a slacker, that's all. I'm not interested in a blooming thing, even having my own way. Now"—he leaned forward a little to bring his eyes into a line with hers and the nervous hand seemed there to hold down the papers, it was so still—"I brought you here to ask you a question. Did my father tell you I was broken up over my mother's death?"

Sally looked at him a perceptible moment.

"Answer," he said peremptorily. "Don't give yourself time."

There was something sweetly cool about Sally, the fragrance of an April flower.

"I had to think," she said. "Suppose he did? I shouldn't give him away."

"Answer," he said again. "Did he tell you that?"

And luckily, as she thought, she didn't have to give father away. He wasn't guilty.

"No," said she.

"Very well," he said. "So far so good. If he hasn't told you yet, he will. And if he does, if he tells you I was devoted to my mother and haven't been the same since her death, what would come into your mind first?"

Sally stared at him: a personable young man, but clearly not in his perfect mind. She sat there puzzling over him. He turned angry.

"Then I'll prompt you," said he. "This is what you'd think, just two words: Œdipus complex."

Sally had been appropriately calm, but now she went up in flame. Over some aspects of modern ritual she was as bored as he. She must be excused if, having lived for a year and a half under a shower of catch-words, she was exasperated at finding them pelting her again.

"I'm not that kind," she said. "I'm not well read and I'm not intelligent, and don't you think it. Now we'd better go down."

She got up and stood there, a hand on the back of her chair, and looked at him. He had bent his head and she could not see his face, but now he turned it slightly, and she gave a little sound of pity. It was flushed and the lips quivered. The dark eyes were like the eyes of an animal that suffers without hope. She sat down again and he continued looking at her. It

was all in her hands, she understood. If anybody was to change the interview into something reasonable, she must do it.

"No," she said quietly. "I don't talk that lingo. It bothers me. I've been hearing it a lot. Don't you know how a thing gets on your nerves?"

"Yes," he said. "I know." He seemed to be looking about for words not likely to be offensive. "I know. I don't suppose I can make you understand why I came at you with it. You seem so different. But I had to know what you were thinking."

"I'm not thinking very much anyway," said Sally, with a cheerful candor. "I'm just home, you see, and it all looks nice to me, the bare trees, winter coming, and everybody prosperous. Somehow you forget the countries over there."

Here she halted with a little surprised feeling of seeing him clearly. He was somehow crippled: his hurt was of the mind, but no less real for that. Had the war done it? She thought not. Had a girl, the sort who would, from the pseudo-learned patter of the day, have met his grief with those two words? She thought so. The words in themselves did not matter, but they might suggest to him a kind of girl who mattered very much. She knew that kind.

"There's no use expecting to be happy," said Sally, in her serious way. "Not as the world is now. Things are upside down and we're dizzy. My father says so."

"Do you talk with him a lot?"

"I'm going to," said Sally. "I've been interviewing him, but he doesn't know it. He says we expected to find ourselves in the kingdom of heaven after the war,

and it's only a bedlam of crime and mediocrity. We talk about being red-blooded when we're chiefly funny. And the 'great sincerity,' when it's only bad manners and seeing who'll yawp the loudest. He says the only thing we can do is to stick our fingers in our ears and try to live through it."

"Yes," said Champ drily, "for the old. But some of us are young."

"Never mind," said Sally comfortably. "We shall be old before we know it. That takes care of itself. And what's the odds, if the great things really come back? He says they will. He says the gods aren't dead. The gods can't die. They have their troubles, same as we do. We're one of them."

"Did he say that?" enquired Calvert, "or do you?"

He was still wary of her. Had she a spurious intelligence of her mother's sort, snatching at all the latest isms, one as good as another, and serving them to an avid crowd? Many people knew Amy Templeton and her activities.

"I never have anything to say," said Sally. "But I should be a simpleton if I didn't know the gods can't die. You take my word for it. Though I'm nobody."

"You're lovely," said he surprisingly. "It isn't what you say. It's the way you look, like a nice slim boy who's done up his hair."

She met this gravely. And it was easy. Nobody could be wrong who noted braids and coils.

"That's mother," said she. "I do it like an old picture of hers. If I heard the scissors in it,—well! I'd defend it with my life. Don't let's talk about me. If Old London's only a plant, tell me what you're really

doing up here, all by yourself, and what's in those papers there?"

Now he looked really shy, and it was becoming to him. It gave him the softness of a lifted glance, so that her heart warmed to him and she wanted to say: "Bless the boy!"

"Verse, most of it," said he. "Not very good, but the best I can do. I've dried up now, somehow. I can't write it unless it comes like a geyser or an oil well. I won't put in a pump. And somehow it's stopped up."

"Read me," said Sally daringly. "See if I can tell."

He shook his head.

"Not on your life," said he. "But here's something you can see, if you want to. Plans. A big open air theatre. Groves. Gardens. Gallant walks. Vistas. Acres and acres in pleasure grounds, and father having it sprung on him when it's a little further along, so he won't miss his Parthenons and Londons and things."

"I'd love that," said Sally. "A theatre! And what kind of plays?"

"Greek, sometimes, but really anything that's for pleasure. Not highbrow, you know—except the Greek. Lots of dancing, lots of—well, loveliness. I can't put it any better than that. The kind that's got Pan in it and all the nymphs, and turns your head so it's hind part before. You know."

"I bet I know," said Sally. "Father'd love it. No, I mustn't look at them." For he had quite excitedly drawn out a pile of blue prints. "We must go down."

He began to laugh, and she smiled at him, noting

how it changed his face. A personable young man, she concluded again, a fine, handsome young man. That girl was a fool.

"And after all, you're a bit of a simpleton," said he. "You may know about the gods not dying, but I bet a quarter you don't know what my father sent you up here for."

"Why, yes, I do," said Sally. "He told me. Old London. It isn't his fault there isn't any."

His laughter came on him again.

"It's funnier than I thought," said he.

"It might easily be," said Sally, with dignity.

"You didn't even see he was throwing me at your pretty head. He's probably proposing for you now downstairs, according to the Victorian formula, and your father's telling him he's dotty."

If he hoped to stir her in the smallest degree, he was disappointed. She got up and smiled at him, and the smile was patently conventional. He had been put in his place and felt correspondingly dashed.

"We must go down," said she. "Father'll be ready. I love this room."

As she finished, her light step brought her to the door, and he followed, feeling in every sense clumsy: in a physical sense, too, and this, for so finely equipped a young man, was unusual.

The two men in the library rose at her entrance and she went to Mr. Calvert with a prettily proffered hand. He held the hand and gazed at her. Her sincerity of glance, her grace of cordiality enchanted him, and he at once detected and began to bank upon the awakened life in Champ. If he had thrown her at Champ's

head, though he couldn't estimate the impact he knew she must at least have hit, even if she glanced off.

"My dear," said he, "your father and I've had a great talk. I hope it won't be long before we see you here again."

Champ had gone back upstairs. Sally, who would not have been surprised at any manifestation of his queerness, thought he might be fleeing the necessity of saying good-by; but he was down again with an embroidered Chinese shawl, and this he put on her shoulders with a sober care she found pleasing.

"It was his mother's," said Calvert, in an aside to Templeton. Even that seemed pathetically to mean something. "I saw it in his room the other day."

The large footman hovered in the background, but Champ opened the door for them. He recoiled a step. It seemed as if he had done it as much to invite some one in as to let them out, for a girl, in the anomaly of apparently bare legs and a fur coat, stood there smiling at them inclusively, but with a gloved hand outstretched to Champ. The glove was a thick one, slightly worn. She had been driving a car. Sally, with a feminine acuteness, noted that everything about her was fashion's last and that she had the wilful small face with large eyes and delicate pointed chin the magazine covers have made familiar, as if the printed page governed the type as fashion prescribes its clothes. In that first instant, it was apparent that the girl was to find no welcome. Champ was taken aback and his father looked plainly disconcerted. But she seemed impervious to rebuff, and her light laugh answered them, sufficiently, Sally thought, with a smile

of her own as she and her father, having previously said their good nights, went on down the drive. It was not a bad thing, Sally judged, for the gloomy young man to be besieged by this bit of girlish sophistication, so unmoved herself. Let him scowl at her and see what she made of it.

Calvert had spoken her name, "Irene!" but almost as if he said it to himself in answer to his own surprise, and it was so patently not an introduction that Templeton and Sally could have found no reason for lingering. Irene had merely glanced at them with a momentary curiosity. She had her own part to play.

Champ looked rather grim, but he was getting his coat and his father was inviting the young vision in. She stepped into the hall, but she would go no further. Now she had possessed herself of Calvert's hands, and was smiling at him in a deprecating way, as if she knew how unwelcome she was but could not allow herself to retreat.

"You'll forgive me?" she said prettily, though not in a pretty voice. It was the high, untrained note of the ingenuous American who assumes the quality of a voice to be the will of God, and therefore not to be improved upon. "I ran away. They're dancing, and I just thought of it like that"—she gave his hands a quick pressure—"and got my coat and ran. Bobby Fletcher's Ford was there and I took it—and here I am!" She raised her eyebrows, looking whimsical and piquant. "As a matter of fact, Bobby's probably following with the gang. I thought I heard a yell."

Champ was now beside her, hat in hand.

"I'm ready," said he.

"My dear boy!" said Calvert. "My dear!" This last to the girl, though she was not dear to him. Her incursions into Champ's life were hateful beyond considering. He knew she was, by birth, the pink of respectability, but she was no less dreadful in a bizarre way he dared not formulate, lest he should find Champ bound to her. "You're not alone?"

She laughed again and gave his hands a little toss before releasing them.

"Of course I'm alone," said she. "Twelve miles in —what time is it now? Never mind. But the speed fiend hasn't anything on me."

"I'm going back with her," said Champ to his father, and Calvert was shaking his head in a state of worry she found diverting.

"You'll let me telephone your mother," said he. "Just to say you're all right and Champ is taking you home."

"Not on your life!" she pronounced emphatically. "Mother? She doesn't know I'm gone. She won't, if you don't tell her. She'll only see Champ dancing with me in a minute or two and wonder why he isn't in evening togs and think it's because he's such a bear. Ready, Champ? Good-bye, Mr. Calvert. I'll return him in good condition—sometime."

Champ went down the steps beside her and took a look at the car, this while she got in and placed herself at the wheel.

"You're not going to drive," he said quietly, waiting.

She also waited. After perhaps three minutes she enquired:

"Want me to go back alone and drive—you know! As I did the night we came out from town and had our row?" Her voice caught there, encountering a sob, but he thought he knew that sob. As it happened, he was wrong, though he had heard many like it. Still, in a thin way, a way as thin as the voice, it was genuine. "Well?" she said. Then, treating herself to a vigorous "damn," she yielded. Perhaps the "damn" was necessary, that she might yield cheerfully, and it was her aim to be cheerful. In no other way, so she believed, do you keep the game in your hands.

The exchange of seats was effected, and presently they were on the road, Champ driving. She was silent as long as she could bear it, for she had not seen him in three weeks and she had missed him.

"Champ," said she, "I wish your father liked me."

No reply.

"It's going to make me very uncomfortable. Especially," she concluded, after a further silence, "as I like him."

There seemed no evidence of his taking an adequate interest in her and she turned to wheedling.

"Champ, don't be hateful. If we were married, should you act like this?"

"Probably not," said he. "Most likely I should begin by doing the Bill Sykes act and dragging you round the room by the hair of your bob."

She leaned nearer.

"Would you?" she murmured. "I'd love that. Now I really know you. You're a cave man, aren't you, Champ?"

"Not so you'd notice it," said Champ brutally. "It's only that you make me so infernally mad."

He was not thinking of her but of himself and warily considering, in the manner of the hunted male, how to escape her. He thought he knew her through and through. She was without heart beyond the organ that registered her breathing, and she was playing this particular game according to the emotional rough and tumble of her kind. It was, he thought, simply a debauch, whereby she justified herself among the moderns, magnificent in their determination to take the world as it is and not as sex hypocrisy has marred it. But he was unjust to the inner core of her disordered passion. She did love him, after her kind, and that her nature was not touched to the finest issues did not make her less vulnerable to the wounds he dealt her. As she could have told him, his words were a hit, a very palpable hit, and she sat wincing.

They went on soberly through the freshness of the night, and she considered her position. She was not one to play the game of emotional adventure without paying for it. Her bravado was chiefly imitative, and what another type of neurotic could do easily cost her more sheer energy than she had to give. Her understanding of the world movement impelled her to believe that when she found her mate, it was her part, in conformity with the scheme of nature itself, to annex him with a courage and a simplicity of daring equal to Juliet's own. But though she aimed at Juliet's naked sincerity, she had lacked her irresistible beauty of approach. She thought of Juliet a great deal after she and Champ had seen the play together. She had

dreams when she saw herself also as the victim of a like immortal destiny, and she advanced the more impetuously toward its dark fulfilment. In the blind desire to justify her daring by the display of an untrammeled passion, she quenched his own ardor of pursuit, and far from adoring her because she was too heroic to await him, she seemed, in spite of his decency of belief in her, of a disconcerting precipitancy. Champ had in him the secret beauties of belief in women which the imaginative youth guards even from himself until they compel him to his destiny of proof and reward him by fruition or overthrow. But she had moved him, this too eager child of a graceless age, and he had acquiesced in her choice of him until one other scented night when they were driving home and she dared him to stop, leave the car and take a wood-path they knew and find, she told him, Diana in the brakes. Thus she quoted a line out of his own verse, and he trembled a little at the hardihood of her folly and warned her that woods were places where Diana was not always the sole lessee, but Aphrodite, with the Furies not far away. Upon this she whispered that it was Aphrodite she meant, and he laughed out, seeing her behind her fleeting glamour, not brave maidenhood meeting its own, but a poor little wisp blown about through a rather unpleasant smelling fog, with a sound of jazz signalling her she knew not where. Fatally, too, he thought of her mother, a bewildered lady, who perennially wondered what the younger generation was coming to, and there was no temptation left, save to get the child home before the bewildered lady wondered herself into fits. But his laugh had done what no maternal

precepts could have done, and Irene sat up and looked straight before her while he smiled a little over mother. At length she said, as after consideration:

"I hate you. I never want to see you again. If I kill myself, you may know you did it."

That was all, but his mind refused to ignore the glimpse he believed he had of her. He had been drifting into a bond he half accepted as inevitable. But did he love her, this little fragment of her time, too slight to play the game with skill, too badly imitating her more impetuous models to borrow the glamour with which they were clever enough to dress the scene? Perhaps nobody had ever thought Irene Renfew pathetic enough to be as sorry for her as he was at their parting that other night, when she stepped out of the car and flashed away from him into the house. And there had been no word between them since until, under the strain of his silence, her resolution broke and she appeared at his father's door.

As Templeton and Sally went down the drive, to take the longer and less obstructed way home, she drew the shawl about her and slid her arm through his.

"What did you talk about?" she asked.

"The world," said Templeton. "And his precious Champ. How did Champ strike you?"

"He's just like all of us," said Sally, as if, considering its universality, it hardly mattered. "Us humans. He's homesick, lonesome. And he wants his mother. That's probably all."

Templeton selected the only part of this likely to concern Sally herself.

"You aren't lonesome?" he asked.

"Not this minute," said Sally, hugging his arm. "But most of the time, yes—frightfully."

"You shouldn't have come home," said Templeton remorsefully. And yet he had had nothing to do with it. "What made you?"

"Oh—things," said Sally evasively. "Besides, I knew mother wanted me. She wrote me, you know. What was I going to do? Would I write? Would I talk? Why not go on the stage? She remembered I used to dance, that kind of wild dancing of mine. I saw she was going to be all broken up if I dwindled into a neat spinster and never did anything at all. And there's nothing I want to do. So, if there hadn't been other reasons, I should have come back to see if there was anything she was clever enough to do with me: make a petticoat or something, if there isn't enough of me for a gown."

"God bless us!" said Templeton. He seemed to find Sally's life beginning where his left off.

"You see," said Sally, "I can't have her disappointed." She stopped short and he wondered if she had been about to add, "again." But, if her mind supplied anything, she was unconscious of it, and she continued, with a curious intonation that might have been perplexity or even wonder: "Isn't it queer everybody wants to do something? everybody but me. I don't. It's absolutely true: if I see a picture I love, I never wish I had painted it. If I read a book, I don't wish I could write. Now that Elizabeth of yours,

she that scours the pans and digs out Virgil—I wish I could step into her skin. Just to satisfy mother, you know."

Templeton thought it over for a minute. Perhaps she was of a domestic mind.

"I can't seem to remember,' he said, "whether you liked to do things about the house."

"Mercy, no!" said Sally. "It was always you, poor dear, that had to cook and bottle-wash. I was a sneak and stayed out of it just as far as I possibly could. You see, father, all that business, hiring servants and putting up with them and conciliating them so they won't leave, and filling up the gaps when they do,—well, I can't explain it, but it just makes my stomach turn right over."

"I know," said Templeton.

The sensations of that particular internal bouleversement were not so far away that he had to recall them with difficulty. It should be remembered as being soon after this that he wrote his Sophia Colfax Papers on housewifery, six of them, showing such insight into the complexities of a housewife's career that women read them with tears and laughter, declaring no one had ever so understood their sex and its mysterious destiny. The popularity of the papers became so startling to Templeton and his editor that they faked a picture from an old daguerreotype and published it as Sophia Colfax, and not until Templeton met the broad placidity of Sophia's face beneath her false front did he feel entirely safe from discovery. He had let himself go. At last, in an impish recklessness, he would

"tell the world," and it seemed to him, in the writing, that if he could pour out all the accumulated hatreds of his kitchen slavery he might cleanse himself of its infection. He told how unnatural it was for the natural woman to live in a relation of mere self-interest and expediency with beings who, in turn, felt in the same degree alien to her and, except in the rarest cases, frankly hated the work of their hands. He pictured the housewife as living a life of daily guile, forced not only to follow the beaten ways of business ethics but to satisfy the ideals of the household critic at her elbow. She must not only be of a perfect knowledge, but she must seem to be, in order that biscuits should be crisp and steaks done to a turn: for who would serve acceptably a being no cleverer than one's self? And then, again from the feminine standpoint, he deplored the overwhelming necessity of bringing an anxious psychology into the kitchen. Must not the housewife spend hours upon hours of the life God gave her for mysterious ends, in untangling the idiosyncrasies of the beings whose good or ill favor determined the domestic weather of her house? Would a man, he bitterly enquired, shifting his point of attack, to pour out his heart in full flood, under the safety of the pseudonym, would a man dedicate to Bridget or Hilda or Susan the amount of soul analysis worthy the heroines of song and story? No! for a man, all these things were accomplished while he was in his cradle. He could come home in full possession of his own intellectual mood and keep it intact through that most trenchant ordeal, dinner, without specula-

tion on the contentment or possible disaffection of the being who set his plate before him. So far as he was concerned, she could move in the cloud of her silence. He did not have to agonize, like madam, on the other side of the table, over the quality of the silence, whether it merely fulfilled the canons of a perfect decorum or veiled also the antagonism of the malcontent who would leave to-morrow. No, the domestic world, said Sophia Colfax, was out of joint. You wanted to look at the moon, but that infernal little sixpence of daily service shut off the view.

What Templeton loved was to live in a cloud. It kept his soul in health. He could scarcely bear to get a too revealing glimpse of his fellows or find them more than common keen in their espials upon him. He really wanted to "walk invisible," turn a corner sometimes when he saw a man he knew, not that he'd anything against the man but because, at that moment, the fit was on him to be unseen. And yet actually he had to concentrate on managing the sovereign in his kitchen, by bribes, by conciliatory wiles, because the time had passed for the bluff authority he could have exercised without thinking—and all this that Amy should not feel her house falling about her ears or be despised because it was so queer a house. Yes, at this time Sophia Colfax was his nearest friend. She did a good deal to keep him on his base. And when, in his last paper, he portrayed that lost beneficence, the New England "help," grandmothers sobbed in the reading and middle-aged women wondered what life was like when such a paradise could bloom.

Amy read these papers and debated getting hold of

Sophia Colfax. She wanted to give a talk on her. Templeton shuddered, feeling himself in jeopardy, but his editor was loyal and the danger passed.

Now Sally and her father, going home in this state of contentment with each other, reverted again to the Calverts. Sally brought it on.

"Would you mind," said she, "not telling mother about my being taken off alone to talk about Old London? Don't speak of Mr. Calvert's precious Champ. Don't speak of him at all."

"Very well," said Templeton. "Mum's the word."

Sally was opening a door into a secret little room where Amy was not to come. He smiled at finding in himself an answering sense of parental rivalry.

"Mother'll ask all sorts of things," said Sally. "I suppose you know she expects me to marry him."

"For heaven's sake!" Templeton said. "Why, she's scarcely seen him."

"Oh, that wouldn't make any difference," said Sally gloomily. "She knows he's there, dripping with money, and that's enough. Father!" She dragged on his arm and stopped him. "I'm not saying nasty things about mother. You know I'm not."

"Of course you're not," said Templeton, starting her on again. He thought she had been keyed quite high enough for one night. "You've always adored mother."

She went on obediently, but she did put one more question and it sent such a stab through him that he wondered whether she could feel the thrill of it under her hand.

"You do, too, father. You adore mother, too, don't you?"

There was but one thing for it, and he answered without hesitation:

"Of course I adore mother. Let's go in through the kitchen and see if Elizabeth left the fire all right."

So the small crucial moment passed, and he wondered if he might be getting a sense of false security. He had had so many escapes of late that he was inclined to consider them the fallacious compensations of a lost integrity.

X

That night, when he and Sally had valiantly ridden the waves of curiosity that met them when they came in upon Amy at her task, and he was at last sitting alone by the library fire, he went back to this little talk with Sally, as if he took a precious but disquieting book from his pocket and began turning the leaves again. Did he adore mother? Why, no, he answered, in this new candor he was allowing himself, he wasn't conscious of adoring her. Had she any least part in the discontent that was keeping him in a yeasty ferment almost like the tumult of youth? There was a time when she was the yeast itself, the very motion and tang of life; but that had died with the years, and at present he couldn't assure himself whether it had been a real adoration or whether he had been taught by the romantics that the emotion of love behaved in that way. Had Amy been more than an outline on the background of life, the sunrise light, the rosy bloom? Had he merely looked up from his happy task of poetry and youth and seen her there and taken her for their embodiment? And all this might have been a puerile sort of folly in a husband traveling the prosaic way of middle-aged complacency, but the question had lodged like an arrow in the middle of him and he had to wonder whether it drew blood and how much. How great a part had Amy in this uneasiness of his

over the dearth of things that made life warmly worth living? He would be honest. Was he still passionately in love with her? Assuredly, no. He would feel mawkish enough to intrude upon her absent-minded intellectuality. Did he want her to be passionately in love with him? Good God, no! That would be even worse. He felt hot in the face with sheer embarrassment. He found himself very funny, knowing how inevitably his fellow men would find him so, and he acquiesced in their derision. He simply didn't like life as he saw it. They would have infallible remedies for that, those men of his own age. What did he expect, they would ask him. He'd had his youth. Hadn't he built up something out of it, to serve him in these days when he was finding no pleasure in them? The young would flout him. What did he expect, they would ask, in their turn. The real trouble was, they would remind him, simply that he wasn't young any more, and he was irritated by the conditions they were busy making over for him. The former things had passed away, and he'd better get on the band wagon and start with them whither they were driving it. Naturally he was uncomfortable. They could well see that. The old hypocrisies were being downed by this hardy return to nature's truth. Of course it hit him on the raw. But buck up, old chap. No use in grousing. These things had to be.

Well, he had expected the former things to pass away. He had looked for it, waited for it, breathless, all those last days of the war. But he hadn't even suspected beauty, too, would pass, and dignity and the

mystery that had once hung like a veil before human eyes, and the ineffable that never could be anything but mystery and so made man worship and adore. You had to veil your eyes when you worshiped, if you were kneeling before anything dazzling enough to inspire worship at all. About this business of looking funny to the normal man: you would always look funny if you stepped outside the common track. The greatest tragedies had their ironically incongruous side, if you were constrained by your own personal bent to take them that way. Nothing, for example, was funnier to the onlooker than the madness of love. Therefore if you had discontents and yet wanted to grow old decently, you hid your mental warfare, though it might go clashing on inside you until it deafened your ears and tired them out for the ordinary sounds of life. He began to suspect grandsire sitting there by the hearth, so silently acquiescent, was seething inside, or else wilfully deadening himself to news from the outer world because he hadn't the heart to seethe. But, Templeton told himself with sudden vigor, he had the heart. He'd let it kick up as much of a row inside him as it liked. At least, it proved he was alive. And when he found himself far from this present scene of unavailing tears, very far indeed inside that old lost world of ecstatic romance which is poetry, he was recalled by a leaf-like stirring in the hall and Sally came quickly in. He glanced at her in concern because the night was getting on. She came directly to him and sat down on the floor at his feet.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"No," said Sally. She put out her hand to the basket of cones and fed the fire. "I'm wide awake, and I knew you were. Been working?"

"No," said Templeton. "I don't work much at night."

"You used to."

"Yes. That was when I was doing outside stunts, stories and such."

"Father, don't you write stories any more?" Sally asked, rather wistfully.

"Not any more," said Templeton. He still looked on it as a happy circumstance and found no difficulty in being cheerful over it. "Wasn't I lucky to have the machinery slow down before the magazines threw in a brick and stopped it?"

She put that aside. He didn't know whether it was because she couldn't conceive of his work as ever going out of fashion or whether she had found it so long out-dated that the indifference of the market was inevitable.

"I was such a fool," said she, in a little hurried outburst as if the confession made her real reason for being down there with him, "to say I hated housework. Of course I do. But what of it? I'll learn to do it. That prim Elizabeth'll teach me. And I can take that off your shoulders anyway." She gave a little laugh. "I still think," she said, "it's a pity I'm not an Elizabeth. Elizabeth could learn anything. She's gasping to. Mother'd love it. Father, isn't Mr. Calvert a dear?"

"I noted," said Templeton drily, "your telling your mother you meant to marry him."

"Well, she asked me," said Sally triumphantly, as if that settled it.

"Not at all. She asked you if the son was at home. I heard her."

"Yes," said Sally, "but in that tone, the one that means—O father, I'm a pesky little beast! I'm not making fun of mother."

"If you did marry him," said Templeton argumentatively, "—of course I mean the father—that would settle the question of your fussing over a career."

Sally came to her feet and stood looking down at the fire. Templeton thought she looked sad.

"Sally, my darling," said he, "I know what's the matter with you. You're over-trained. Now you give it up. Lie abed and read a novel. Don't go trailing round to clubs after mother. When mother and I tell you to do anything, don't do it. That's the modern way, and I'm not sure but it's a good one. Withdraw, my Sally, into the inside of yourself and grow a shell over you."

She was smiling faintly, as she turned, and she kissed the top of his head on her way to the door.

"You do it, too," she said. "You withdraw yourself."

What would she think, he reflected, as he sat there another ten minutes, if she knew he was going to cut stick and run?

XI

A CERTAIN quiet fell upon the Hilliards' house, and Elizabeth found herself unable to trust it: for though she sometimes tried to take it for peace, again it looked like the old enemy with another face. But something had happened. Her mother had evidently given up her trysts. She went over to the Templetons' a part of the day and worked in apparent content, and Elizabeth, going home after dinner, always found her there. The house was in order and Enoch sat by the stove for his somnolent hour and then went to bed, and Elizabeth pored over her books, while her mother mended by the kitchen lamp. Elizabeth had occasionally, when she could withdraw her mind from the pious Æneas, an irritated sense that it must be dull for her mother in the kitchen alone, and once went out to ask her why she didn't come into the sitting-room. Eunice looked up, and her great startled eyes roused in Elizabeth a sudden anger. The fire in them was an accusation. Why should they flame so at a word?

"I don't feel to," she said, "not when you're studyin'. Anybody don't want to be disturbed over their books."

Elizabeth retreated. The next night she brought her books into the kitchen and sat down at the table. Her mother said nothing, but she moved her mending basket, and so they spent the evening together, with

the stockings and pious Æneas. But Elizabeth could not do any whole-hearted work, for, at the bottom of her mind, there was always the smouldering anger against her mother for thrusting Blaisdell between them. Elizabeth had never taken things lightly in what seemed to her so serious a world, but once, on a wakeful night, she did laugh out suddenly from her bed. Her mother had brought Blaisdell into the house and she herself had brought pious Æneas. Perhaps she was unconsciously learning to unbend over the grimness of things, there was so much laughing done at Red House, now Pat was there, and she had, to a certain extent, slipped into the habit. It had happened once when Sally was in the kitchen and Elizabeth had asked her to translate a French phrase, and Sally had been concerned by her accent. An Elizabeth who was out for pure learning, and an accent like that! She told her father and Templeton said:

"Correct her. She'd be glad. Tell her you'll read with her, if she likes. We both will. She'll love you to death. The man that makes two French verbs sprout in Elizabeth's brain where but one grew before! Come on, Sally, we'll all parley-voo."

So they invited her to stay after dinner on certain nights, and withdrew into the east room, leaving Amy in the library, and Pat joined them when he wasn't too lazy, and hindered and made merry. Nothing was serious to him, it seemed, and yet his brother knew many things connected with his own advancement proved serious in the end. His standing in the professional world had not come by chance. Templeton had been a long time getting to it, but he knew Pat,

for all he so flouted the gods of the market-place, played a good business game. He wondered what Elizabeth thought when her grave eyes dwelt upon the jester as he made light of her gods. She did smile, but unwillingly. It was good for her, Templeton thought, to learn there was a world of light laughter outside the pedagogical circle; but was it equally good to have Pat the one to open it to her? Was Pat attractive to the feminine eye and mind, the feminine soul? He did not know. So many women now ran after the merely conspicuous figure, a man was likely to have a certain following because he had written verse. "Damn it all!" he caught himself muttering one night at the French session when he found Elizabeth's eyes again seeking Pat with that wondering look which might have been perplexity at his folly or soft responsiveness to his charm. Pat heard him.

"You mustn't do that," said he. "English is barred. Say 'sacr-r-r'—or 'son of a blue pig.' "

They were about breaking up and Elizabeth put the books tidily away. Pat went to the window.

" 'Dark is the night,' " said he. "But it's that soft darkness I like. I'll walk home with our promising pupil, so I will."

He went into the hall for his hat, and Elizabeth, to Templeton's surprise, turned on him an odd look. Was it also alarm? "Don't let him!" it said. "Do something, for I can't." Now to Templeton the appeal seemed intensely earnest, of a kind not to be disregarded. He had not given much thought to Elizabeth outside her heavenly sphere of serving the gods of home, though her wistful desire of improving herself

did seem to him pathetic in a world where people aim chiefly at getting into the glare, no matter how they look when they get there.

"We'll all go," said he. "Sally, find your coat."

But at that moment, perhaps reminded by the stir of their rising, Amy called from the library:

"Sally, come here."

Sally ran across the hall and did not return, and neither did Elizabeth, who had gone for a last look at the kitchen fire. The two men stood for a moment in the hall, the door open and the night breeze blowing in, and then it dawned on Templeton.

"She's gone," he said, "the back way. She didn't want us and she's fled the coop. Come out and see, and if she has we'll go for a prowl. I will, anyway. It's a great old night."

But Pat was halfway up the stairs.

"I'm going to work," said he.

Templeton found himself left alone to meet the social exigency of a "help" fleeing to avoid an escort. Hat and stick in hand, he went into the kitchen, and found it dark and still. He stepped out into the porch and saw, half-way down the field, a small uncertain star. This was Elizabeth's lantern. It was bobbing along absurdly, and he struck into the foot-path with an amused sense that he might as well give himself the objective of finding she got home safely, a girl who made the trip every night and was now, simply because they were reading French with her, in the altered position of a guest. Social idiocies were, he reflected, nothing if not illogical. She went steadily on to the back road, crossed it and after a moment must

have gone in and shut the door, for the light had disappeared. He halted a moment at the side of the road, wondering whether he wanted to go back by the path or take the longer détour of the road itself. That would mean stumbling in the blackness of two or three small patches of woods; but, for some reason, he was not in any degree a tame creature to-night. He felt drawn to the woods and wished he had a wild beast's reasons for being out in them, a prowl for food or fighting. As he stood there, conscious of his own urge of life, the soft night air on his face and his heart beating strong, the door of the house opened, banged shut again and the swaying lantern came bobbing down the path. It was Elizabeth. She moved with a dash of long hurrying strides, and turned the way he meant to go, if he also took the road. He probably would have stood still, to be unnoticed and let her go her gait on some errand immaterial to him, but he was suddenly aware that she was crying, perhaps not with tears but an undertone of lament. He hurried after her and called her name. She stopped, and he came up with her.

"Something happened?" he asked. "Is it your mother?"

They were standing quite close and he bent a little to read her face. It was changed. The abstracted, studious look of an hour ago had gone. Terror was there and a wild dismay. She shook her head.

"It's all right," she said. "I've got to go on an errand, that's all."

"Not alone," said Templeton kindly. "See how dark it is. Tell me and let me go."

Then she did really break and began crying silently.

"O my soul!" she said. "O my soul!" And with the adjuration she did not seem to him a Minerva-like person on the way to an intellectual destiny, but a country maid somehow done to death by the trickery of wrong.

"Come," he said, with a calculated authority. "Tell me and I'll see to it for you."

She put her hand up to her throat and held it there.

"No," she said, "you couldn't. I've got to see to it myself."

She grew calmer and made a step to go on. But Templeton kept at her side and, finding he meant to continue with her, she stopped again and addressed him, not as she was used to doing, as a personage to be considered, but with a passion like anger.

"Don't I tell you I've got to do it myself? Why won't you go along where you were going and let me—" She had meant to say "let me alone," but that did seem to her lacking in propriety and she refrained.

"It happens," said Templeton, returning to his usual tone with her, "I was going round the back road. You don't mind my walking behind you, do you, so long as I'm going anyway."

"No! no!" said she. "You're not going. You couldn't be so hateful as that, when it's nothing but a walk! Can't you give that up? Can't you just go home and not tell anybody you've seen me, never speak of it—never, never—to me or anybody else?"

It was now apparent to him that this was what he must do. Whatever this might be, to her it was a

tremendous thing he had, if he felt kindly to her, to turn out for.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Of course I'll go back. But don't you want to think it over? Don't you want to ask yourself whether you could go back, too? give it up, whatever it is, just go home and leave it all till morning?"

The kind reasonableness of his tone seemed to have an effect on her, but one he had not expected. She grew limp. He knew it by the way her shoulders sagged.

"Yes," she said, in a broken voice. "Perhaps it is best. After all, what could I do? Only then it didn't seem as if I could stand the house. I thought, that first minute——"

Here she turned about and he turned with her. She walked very fast now and they did not speak until she halted at her own yard.

"Don't you think," he hesitated, and then changed the form of his question: "You wouldn't let me come in?"

"Oh, no," she said, on a rising note, and he imagined her wanting to add, "that least of all."

"You're not afraid of anything?" he persisted.

"No, indeed," she said earnestly. "It's nothing of that kind."

"Then I'll go," said Templeton, "back home by the path. I won't try the road to-night."

"Oh, that's good," she said fervently, and noting her relief he wondered who was upon the road. Whom did she expect him to meet?

"Good night," he said and moved away, but was

scarcely in the pasture before he found her following.

"You won't speak of it," she began, and he interrupted her:

"No, not to anybody. And I won't think of it."

Then he did wait until the lantern had again quavered up the path and was veiled by the closing of the door before he turned homeward, wondering how he was to keep from thinking.

Elizabeth set her lantern on the kitchen table and took off her hat and coat. She put wood into the two stoves and lighted the sitting-room lamp. The lantern she left on the table. It seemed to her she might need it, or at least that the act of putting it out would be something decisive, an implication of surrender. The lantern was the significant beacon kept alight to strengthen, not her hope of any power to help, for that was already gone, but her wakefulness of will. She looked anxiously about the kitchen. Where was the little slip of paper she had found shut into her Latin lexicon? It would have looked merely like a marker to any casual gaze, but she had taken it out and read in the cramped illiterate hand of the anonymous letter sent her, those weeks ago:

"He has lost his job. He can be anywheres any time now."

She understood at once and scorned herself for her stupidity. Of course her mother had not given up meeting him. She was simply going at night now when Elizabeth, like a fool, was staying at Red House to study French subjunctives and laugh at the foreign Mr. Templeton's brilliant talk. She crumpled up the

paper in her hand, seized her lantern and ran out to find her mother, hurrying without hope or reason, for her mother must be found. But she was glad she had been prevented from going further. She could not have found them. They would have heard her footsteps, seen her lantern and kept still. And what if she had found them? it would have been the second terrible step in the silent drama she and her mother were moving in together: their common recognition of the drama itself. That seemed to her the lowest plane of their degradation. While she went about the kitchen hunting for the little slip of paper, she became conscious that her left hand, hanging at her side, was closed on a hard something that hurt and felt unkind. The knuckles were white with the tightness of her grip, and her arm, too, was stiff with tension. She opened her fingers and found the little ball of paper. While she had gone running out into the road, when she had taken off her hat and coat in the house, the ball had been in her unhappy hand, as the words from it were in her unhappy mind. The shadow of them must have been on her tear-drenched face, and that was why he knew her to be suffering. How kind he had been!

She took off the stove-cover, dropped in the paper and waited a moment, to see it burn. Then again, as in the road, she felt limp, all the vigor gone out of her and, leaving the lantern on the table and the lamps as they were, she went draggingly up to bed. She heard Enoch moving about his room. He was always noisy, having no estimation of his bumps and blows, and she felt wanly in leaving the note he had

meant to be kind. He was not so much a man as a tree. If you ran into it, you would never blame the tree. She lay down on her bed and wondered how it would seem to sleep and wake as they did at Red House, with no phantom fear at doors and windows, waiting to break in.

XII

It was little more than an hour that Elizabeth had lain there, not consciously trying to keep awake, but listening for a sound below and hearing nothing. She had left the front door unfastened according to the lax custom of the houses in a community where, since nothing untoward seemed to happen, no one thought it ever would. In that hour she did not allow her imagination to follow Eunice into the darkness. She only held herself still and sickened with the pain which seems to be an actual pain of the heart. Finally there was a sound, the stealthy opening and closing of the front door, and she knew her mother had come. Everything in her relaxed, a curtain of darkness descended upon her, and she fell asleep.

In the morning she was awake with the first light, and got up jaded. A cold bath made her shiver. Her young vitality refused to answer it. When she went downstairs, she found Enoch had built the kitchen fire and gone to his milking. The lantern had been hung in its place and the kitchen wore a look of waiting for attention: the hearth swept, the lamp filled and put on the mantel and the warm activities of breakfast begun. She usually had her cup of coffee before going over to Red House, but this morning it was impossible to eat or drink in this squalid scene where she and her mother and Enoch all knew such things and were silent

over them, and she put on her hat and coat and hurried out into the morning air. Enoch was just going to the barn with his milk pail, but, although she was aware of the plodding figure, she did not turn her head to sign or speak to him. She had done with the house, not only for the moment but, in a spiritual sense, forever. The morning was clear and warm. It might have been early spring and the whispering oak leaves expectant of their fall. Before reaching the back yard of Red House, she saw the Templeton brothers standing there talking, as if they were finishing a topic before going in. What would they do? Would Mr. Templeton remember last night and look at her with the sympathy she found beautiful though it had only hurt her then? Would the foreign gentleman, as she called him in her mind, chaff her about running away from them? But they merely greeted her and kept on talking, and she went by, relieved.

Eunice Hilliard had been dressed a long time when she heard Elizabeth come down, but she lingered in her bedroom, wondering what would happen if she could bring herself to go out and act as if there need be "no trouble unless you make it." When she heard the closing of the door and knew Elizabeth had gone, she felt that the first difficulty of the day was over. About to go into the kitchen, she heard Enoch's step with the milk and paused another instant, until she reflected that he knew nothing about her movements and cared less. So she went out and began her housewifely tasks, getting him the breakfast he liked and then sitting down with him to eat. Enoch grunted out a commonplace or two about the day, and she answered

him with nods and a perfunctory smile. To her also he was no more than an insensate part of nature, useful and to be kindly used. Enoch was having his own problems. Queer, he thought, what an unlikely old thing she used to be when Hilliard was alive, all dried up, like the bark of a tree. Just dragged round about her work. No life in her, but had to drag round. Hilliard would see to that. And now she was a likely woman. Stepped as brisk as Elizabeth, and this morning her eyes were like glass bottles and her cheeks as red as a rose. Enoch shook his head, and she looked at him enquiringly. He mumbled something and went off to the barn, and she ceased to think of him. She had a great many other things to think of while she washed her dishes and stepped about the kitchen, making her little world to shine, things once as near to her as her own hand, but unsubstantial now. Eunice Hilliard, after more than forty years, felt that she was just beginning to live. Sometimes she went back to the first of it, her hard-working father and mother, frugal to the last degree and never, with all their parsimony, winning to any tableland of ease, and then the break into a hopeful life with her young husband who proved even more niggardly than they. It was not that he harassed her alone. Their interests being identical, he worked her no harder than himself. Then there were the exquisite moments of her baby's dependence on her, and the clinging affection of the young animal who yet, as she grew, developed an alien cast of mind. She did not, even as a little girl, run gladly to her mother's arms. She was more likely to stand a step away from her and point at her disordered hair,

and when she began to go to the district school and learned to read, books, the real rulers of her life, came in and quenched kind, careless nature utterly. Eunice was able to take pride in Elizabeth's prowess in the country school, but she had an unspoken distaste for these imperious pursuits. Sometimes when Elizabeth would walk the two miles to a small library and return with books she called classic (which always seemed to mean fine print and heaviness to hold) Eunice privately concluded she must have a devil to instigate her to such desires. It was charming to see her, in those days, sitting on the front doorstep, Paradise Lost in her lap, shaded by the curls her mother loved. To Eunice it was not charming, but one of the inexplicable acts of God, intended, for His mysterious purposes, to drain her life of every sweetness. She might not have felt so fierce a jealousy of this one book if she had guessed Elizabeth prized it as little as she could have wished: the child was hammering away at it, not because she was enchanted but because other books had told her how noble it was and John Milton was a name to conjure with.

Elizabeth grew away from her, steadily and more and more. Her every taste was a condemnation of her mother's ignorance. She had, with her ambition and her cruelty of judgment, an unbroken propriety of behavior. She never criticised, but Eunice, out of the insight sprung from her fierce love, knew it was not from kindliness but the rigors of perfection Elizabeth had laid upon herself. Then the break came and the child was away from home altogether, still behaving irreproachably and, as soon as she began to earn,

sending her mother clothes and little comforts, but never love.

Eunice had a fever of starvation upon her when, one day after her husband's death, she was coming home from the little village, laden with parcels because Enoch had needed the horse for mowing, and, in a wooded spot not far from her own pasture bars, she saw a man lying by the side of the road, head down the incline of the bank and his feet in the wheel-track. It was Jim Blaisdell. She had seen him once or twice on the road, a powerfully built fellow with a charm of striding motion, once with his wife, a foolish looking effigy evidently older than he and painted with a ghastly recklessness that made her older still. And here he was, his feet in the road where the first motor car might crush them. She laid her parcels down near the wall and went back to him.

"Here," she called. "You wake up."

He did not stir and she was moved by the defenceless beauty of his sleep. Blaisdell had been very drunk. He was rising slowly to consciousness, but he was not an habitual toper and the liquor had done no more than infuse a slight flush and fulness into his boyish face. Eunice did what she knew must be done. She laid hold of his feet and moved them out of the track. When she had got him safely disposed, she would leave him there and go back to his house, a mile beyond the bend, and tell his wife something had happened to him. But her intention of moving his feet had not resulted hopefully. As she swung them round, his body followed and he rolled down the little slope and came to rest in a bed of fern. She gave a little cry. She

thought she had killed him and jumped down the bank after him, knelt beside him and lifted his head, it looked so low as if, she wildly thought, all the blood would run into it. And because there seemed no way to ease it back to comfort, she sank sidewise from her knees and found herself sitting there, his head in her lap. Instantly the summer day, after the rustle she had made in it, grew still. Her position seemed a natural one, in a quiet broken only by the small activities of a bird flitting near her, with a little rustle and the intent of getting food. She seemed to herself in a far but kindly land. Though she had lived in the country all her life, she had perhaps never sat down in a ferny roadside since she carried her dinner to school. And here she was with a man's head in her lap, not even wondering for the moment whether she should try again to roll him into another posture and then hurry back to notify his wife. His hat had fallen away from him, and she trembled with pleasure at the passing shadows of leaves on his bright hair. And as her hand stole forward to touch the thick warmth of it, his eyes opened, he rolled over and sat up. When the strength of waking ran into his face, it grew younger still and Eunice dwelt upon it with the natural wonder she had been used to feel at the loveliness of Elizabeth's babyhood. Youth and warm kindliness had not been near her for many years. In another instant she might have stirred and then, the spell broken, drawn away from him. But he was speaking and the voice was kind.

"Why, girl," he said, "how'd you come here?"

As he said it, he rose slightly, with the suppleness of

muscles recovered from their torpor, and Eunice found his arm about her. At first, in her innocence of such dallying, it seemed a part of his dependence on her and she suffered it as she would a drowsy head on her shoulder. But he had come wholly to himself, and with the other hand he turned her face to his and involuntarily she closed her eyes, the pink warmth of it was so near. He kissed her, being always ready to take a woman at her own obliging value. The surprise of it was overwhelming, but what she said again surprised her.

"Why," said she, "you've been drinkin'."

His answer was ready.

"I won't again, if you don't want me to."

The kiss had only bewildered her and this asseveration was wonderful in her ears. But time and space came back to her. She saw her parcels lying under the tree, and the busybody of a bird hopped nearer. The world was still going on and she would have to meet it after this bewildering interlude. She tried to draw away from him.

"I've got to go," she whispered.

He did not hold her. He rose to his feet, and they stood there together, his hands on her shoulders.

"You're an awful nice woman," he said. "A regular brick. I never'll forget you."

Instantly she felt the pang of parting. Here was another thing she must lose as she had lost Elizabeth. Suddenly her heart was weak within her and she found herself trembling against him. She was in his arms.

"By God!" he said, "you like me, don't you?"

Her tremor must have answered him, for he kissed

her roughly, then tenderly, and put her from him. He went over to the parcels and picked them up, holding them anyhow, she thought, perhaps breaking the bag and letting the sugar run over the fern. She had stumbled up into the road, a sorry sight, tears still on her cheeks, and he came to her and piled the parcels in her arms. In her foolishness she felt surprise, as if she had thought they would go on together. But of course, she was calm enough to remind herself, that could not be. His home lay in the other direction, a mile away. He shoved his hands into his pockets, as if to preclude their touching her again, and went striding off, bent with the speed of his going. She was foolishly hurt because he had not said good-bye. It was true he had kissed her; but there was the one unspoken word. She dragged herself miserably home, surprised, in a dull way, that although she had been so wild with happiness she was less than happy now. The butterfly had alighted on her hand, and left its dusty pollen there but not its brightness. A man had crowned her and the flowers were withered. When she got home she trembled with thankfulness at the safety of the house, and yet it had never looked to her so barren. She could never feel in it even the meagre acquiescence of her past. Enoch came in for his supper and stared at her.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in his flat, kindly voice. "You ain't fell an' hurt you?"

She smiled wanly at him and shook her head, and after he had gone out again, not satisfied with her answer but forced to leave it at that, she went to the glass and wondered how a man could have

kissed a face like hers. Tired enough, it seemed to her, to fall asleep the minute her head touched the pillow, she did not sleep at all, save in a miserable half-conscious way. Something held her down, like a counterpane of drowsiness, and when she threw it off it was to find no happy clarity of waking life, but only to long passionately for sleep again and feel the choking counterpane. In the morning when she awoke to the familiar walls of her room, they began to tell her things: she had been wild, foolish, crazy, and they could not countenance it. The breakfast dishes said the same and the kitchen stove. Enoch's concerned face said it with emphasis, and they all, from the wall-paper to Enoch, told her she must, whatever it was that had overthrown her, put it away from her. She must forget.

The morning began as usual. Enoch went out to his work, and she turned to her dish-washing. And then, without a signaling knock, the door had opened. It was Blaisdell, and she trembled with delight and fear. He shut the door behind him and came to her.

"Anybody here?" he asked.

It was the tender voice of yesterday, though rough and broken, and so perhaps more moving. She shook her head, and again he took her in his arms and her fears died. But in a time, whether long or short she did not know, she recovered herself and tried to struggle away from him.

"You're a married man," she said.

She said it more than once and thought she must keep on saying it.

"No, I ain't," said he, in an eager denial. "Not as

you think. She's there an' I'm here with you. Don't you see I'm here?"

But she kept on saying: "You're a married man," and finally he shook her, as she stood in the clasp of his arms, and said to her:

"Now look here. I'm goin' to begin work again to-morrow. I've been laid off. But I'll be inside the pasture bars opposite where we were yesterday, an' you be there. Maybe I won't have more'n ten minutes, but enough for this an' this"—he kissed her trembling lips—"an' if you ain't there I'll throw up my job an' be over here after you. Understand?"

Again he was gone, in that bewildering way of urging her heart to madness and then forbidding it to rest under the soft reasonableness she had begun to long for like a child tired of importunate love. She thought she should have told him she would not be inside the pasture bars to meet him. It might have saved him the trouble of coming. Yet she knew she would be there, and the afternoon found her waiting a half hour before him, sick with fear lest he should not come. So it had gone on, a meeting every day for a long time; and then the weather broke and he did not come, and she told herself he never would again. But with the sun his voice and touch were ready for her, as if it could go on forever as it had begun. She could not have told what they talked about: very little, the time was so short. But he was always ready with avowals and denial, for the two kinds of weather, when she doubted or when she let him see that the other woman was never out of her mind. He was the simplest of creatures, yet sometimes he wondered why he was tak-

ing so much trouble for her. She was not young, and earlier in his life he would have shouldered off the passionate responses of a middle-aged woman. There were moments when he was amused at the incongruity of it all; but whatever he felt when he was away from her—and he could forget her easily until the trysting hour, and then his emotion was half curiosity—he had, at bottom, an amazed admiration for her motherly quality, her concern over him when he made his tired bones an excuse for being late. She had none of the childish vanity and acquisitiveness he had found in his wife and other women he had known. Once he brought her a trinket, a little pendant with a chain, and she refused it with such horror that he never ventured to buy her another gift. She seemed to feel herself naked to the world of custom, of right and wrong, having nothing to give but herself and wanting nothing but the solace of what he called his love. Then, when Elizabeth wrote that she was coming home, Eunice, wild-eyed and despairing, told him she could not meet him any more. Why? he asked her, and though she was sure of the necessity, she could not tell. It was not fear at the bottom of her heart, but the mother's passionate allegiance, and she could only say: "No, I can't. She's comin'."

When he left her that night he held her to him, to show his strength, and kissed her enchantingly, to show his tenderness.

"I won't come to-morrow," he said. "Next day I'll come. You be here, waitin'. Remember."

And Elizabeth came the next day, irreproachable, kind as if she owed it to herself, and Eunice that night

cried agonised tears into her pillow and the next afternoon was, as he had bade her, early at her tryst. They did not talk it out. He did not even ask whether Elizabeth had come. And the meetings went on and Eunice had always the feeling that there was something advancing toward her, something formless and terrible. Sometimes it seemed to be coming fast. Again it let her rest a little by coming slowly, for she felt herself breathless as it neared, as if she and not it had to furnish breath for its progress. It was the certainly that sometime he would ask of her the last proof of all and she would have to deny him and so lose him altogether, or pay her body's price, to show him what he was to her, and then go out of her house and leave it to Elizabeth who was clean.

XIII

Champ had taken Irene home and, within two hours, was at his father's door. Irene had been wrong. Though she was missed, the gang had not followed her, and the dancing was going on as she had left it. It seemed to her, as she stood there on the steps beside Champ, raising an anxious little face, grotesque in its gravity under the cheerful paint, as if they had not stopped a moment, these jigging figures, while she had been pathetically striving to win back to happier terms with him. It seemed unreasonably cruel of him to deny her so slight a thing. If he would go in, for an hour, a half hour, a moment's appearance at the door for their recognition, their applause over her game little run in the night to kidnap him! he was tremendously popular with them, and they must have wondered why he had lain doggo all this time and she unable to account for him, save by her brave, high-headed silence. She put her hand on his arm, timidly because she had begun to wonder what aspect of girl he was demanding of her, and asked him:

"Champ, won't you come in?"

He looked at her gravely, put his hand over the one on his arm and gave it a little pressure, kind, no more.

"Couldn't do it," he said. "Forgive me, won't you?"

She flashed out at him and took her hand away.

"You mean you don't want to."

"Run in and send them off," he said. "You're worn to a frazzle. You're living on your nerve. You can't stand it. Get to bed."

He turned away from her and, broken to humility, she called after him: "How are you going to get back?"

He seemed not to hear. Perhaps he really did not. At any rate, she knew he was striding away from her and the fairy mist along the road was helping him. She stood there for several minutes, holding her hands clasped at her side, under the hurt of a keener mortification than he had ever put upon her. It might have been the "pangs of despised love," but to her it no longer seemed to be love but hate. Whatever it was, she must not show it. She must be game. She had her mother to face—perhaps—though that was nothing, only the bother of a futile maternal iteration; but there was also the gang. She put up her head and walked in upon them, laughed and was mysterious, implying she could tell "an' if she would," only, if you wanted adventure, the real article, the way was to drive off alone and find it. Yes, sometime maybe she'd tell them, Bobby anyway, because she'd had to annex his car.

Meanwhile Champ was walking fast to a garage in town where he got a car to take him home. The house was quiet, and he let himself in and went up to bed. His father, he judged, poor dear old biddy with a duckling, might be awake, wondering if he had come, but he couldn't see him to-night. He wanted oblivion, and he wished it might last into eternity. He did sleep late, and when he came down in the middle of the forenoon he saw on the settle at the foot of the

stairs a Chinese shawl. He touched it as if he might find some of the warmth on it yet. But though Sally had left it, it had been in the chill early morning. She liked a before breakfast walk, she told herself, and if she took it back then she need see nobody, even the darling old father she was to marry.

The old father might be a fussy meddler of a parent, but he never embarrassed Champ with questions, not even when he was suffering to know. To-day, meeting for the first time at luncheon, they talked of immaterial things only a degree less commonplace than the weather, and in the afternoon Champ withdrew to his work upstairs. There she had sat, he mused, when he had taken his place at the end of the table and saw Sally's chair at the angle where she had left it, the strangely tranquil girl with the melodious voice and the sincere eyes. What was that look of the eyes? He had been told the individual expression of the eye was given it by the superciliary muscles alone. Poppycock! You couldn't make him believe it wasn't the index of that inward imperious mystery you called the soul. From which it might have been inferred that he was, if not in love with Sally, at least finding in her the novelty of difference. He wanted nothing less than to be in love. He preferred to achieve an island of tranquillity with outlooks upon the beauty that masters the mind, and there devote all that was in him to the writings of his little novels of verse. (The novels were a preliminary. Some time he might climb to poetic drama.) He could not conceive of a girl, as he saw girls, who would contribute to his soul's health in his island. They might dance into his dreams there,

they might hold bacchic orgies upon his mountains. Irene, according to her own view, would not shrink from Babylonian mysteries (which were merely self-expression). But the whole tumult seemed to him disorderly and something not to enter willingly, but to flee from if you had blundered into it, and get a Turkish bath and a hair-cut.

Here was a young man as passionately bent on beauty worship as his forerunners among the poets, and he had a fastidious belief, which he was too shy to mention, in the identity of his body and his soul. He did not propose to let one of the divine pair go without the consent of the other. Body, he would have said, if you take a misstep and let yourself wallow in every slough you fall into, you'll come back smelling of rotten flesh and I sha'n't know you. Soul, if you allow yourself to get mistaken about the rights of the body, you'll come a cropper yourself, and the everlasting fat will be in the fire. Eyes front, both of you. There was no doubt that he was more at ease with the men of his age than the women, these curious-minded girls who seemed to have set themselves some breakneck pace to justify their emancipation. Some of them he never speculated upon; he wasn't interested. But for poor little Irene he was truly sorry. She seemed to him a misfit in a time of blatant avowals and crude materialism. She had the cleverness to memorise the chance word and pick up here a grain and there a grain of scintillant theory; she had desperate courage in playing the game of modernism, but not a fibre of temperamental urge, the sort of elemental sincerity that might have conquered him. She

was merely doing what the spirit of the time told her to do, and the strain of it wore her threadbare.

What would his mother have said to her, the beneficent wisdom that seemed to regard every divagation of the crazy world with kindness, though without curiosity over the dark places revealing themselves in human kind with the cracking of the surface under great events? He was perfectly aware that, to her, this little creature who frankly pursued him as if vindicating her right to pursue, would have been no more than some glittering insect of a day, risen from the water for an hour's sunshine, bent on perpetuating itself, and of no more account in the great destiny which is romantic love than the larva of the pond in the destiny of the child who holds it in his hand. Champ was not aware of having interrogated his mother on these things the world now offered him. He was chiefly aware of her as a beneficence, a wisdom always warm, a citizen of that sacred country he called beauty. He had seen other citizens of it, but none so clad in gowns of price, none speaking its language with so pure a tongue. And he saw how her amazing wisdom and executive force had tranquillised his life and his father's. For, as he had always known since he grew up, his father carried too much weight, the ever-increasing load of money he longed to administer in some way calculated to absolve him from the awkwardness of having it. Champ's mother read his mind about that and, in unobtrusive ways, took charge of the daily tangle and kept it smooth. She was a lavish giver, and administered their fortune with a masterly mind. But after she died, though he kept the

stream of practical beneficence flowing, Old Stephen felt submerged under the flood of money moving in on him and Champ. He was an earnest little man, his mind reaching out for something beyond organised charities, something to be permanent and beautiful on the earth when he should be gone. It was the old hunger for permanence, which is, after all, another side of the shining shield of immortality, a childish longing, as it was in Champ a passionate urge toward the poetry he might never have the aptitude to write. Perhaps Champ had inherited this disease of a mortal discontent. Or was it a disease, or the winged creature trying to burst its shell? Whatever it was, health or sickness, whatever was to be done, Calvert was conscious of expecting Champ to do it. He might write poetry if he wanted to, but it must be poetry that would move the world. Champ regarded his poetry as a shy thing, as secret as a vice, and could not be made to share its daily health and sickness even with so doting a parent. Or there was the game of building up a miniature Athens or a miniature London at their door. Stephen Calvert was raking in the land. Why couldn't Champ get ahead with his plans and let him see history resurrected before he died? And all the time the weight of his money pulled at him and seemed to drag him down.

XIV

Brother Pat, in his facile way of intrenching himself, had moved into the large chamber over the kitchen. It was, he told his brother, the best room in the house for work. That implication of a long stay piqued Templeton's sense of the consistently amusing. Pat was unchanged; he was, Templeton thought, "is now and ever shall be," the old Pat. Templeton usually had an uneasy sense, when his brother turned up either by letter or in person, of things about to happen, either on the score of money or some form of advancement; but he reasoned that Pat had now reached such a point of recognition as not to make any inordinate demands, and it was certainly exhilarating to have him in the house, occasionally running away to town, where he interviewed publishers and gave interviews, and talked delightfully, but with adequate reserve, of the literary set in London. And speedily, according to his custom, he had whipped up a valuable "publicity." After one of these incursions into the literary market-place, he appeared at Red House with a table of monstrous size and a desirable antiquity, and had it carried up to his chamber where, he said, it would help him do the work of his life.

Templeton looked rather dubiously at Amy over this evidence of a protracted stay, but he was not surprised at finding her absent-mindedly acquiescent.

Lack of generosity had never been one of her vices, so long as she was let alone.

The house was running to a charm. Elizabeth and her mother were there a part of the day, and the girl, at least, worked with a religious fervor. Templeton wondered at her: she had so passionate a longing for books, and yet, at the same time, she seemed to keep a steady hand upon the minutiæ of life. But she would not stay now for the evening of study. She cleared the dining table and made the kitchen tidy enough to leave until morning, this with a desperate haste, and took the field path home, almost running in her quickened stride. Templeton, seeing her start out at this breathless pace, wondered what was calling her, and watched her for several nights in succession until she topped the pasture rise and was gone. He wondered if there were other tasks waiting for her at home, and thought perplexedly of the night she had been so wildly moved by some mysterious quest. He had become humorously aware that Pat and Amy were great cronies. Why not? their pursuits ran parallel. Amy sought publicity, and Pat wanted enough of it to advance him in his vagabond course which was yet, to the eye that had watched it since his youth, so neatly calculated. He was deferentially gallant to Amy, and she was helping him on. He had spoken in parlors, he had attended her talks and bolstered up her prestige: he was a notable, there was no doubt of it, and, in a small way, she, too, shared his triumph. He was her husband's brother, she modestly owned, and his public appearances were due to her.

One night, Templeton came into the library and found them, Pat by the fire and Amy at the table where she had the air of a patient sibyl guarding the chronicles of a world; papers were before her, in slippery layers, no more to be reduced to an ultimate order than the world itself.

"The thing to do," Pat was saying, "is to anticipate the time. Don't get too far ahead of it, or you won't be listened to. That's what happens to all the high joss prophets. Be a trifle in advance. Put your ear to the ground, catch the murmurs, and be on the spot. Tell people what they've begun to want."

Amy was regarding him with that tense look of hers which seemed to Templeton an index of her worried anxiety to hold fast every clue touching the earth's progress, to memorise every word. She had no easy job of it, this hard-working Amy. She lacked imagination. She had to cut her garment thriftily, here a remnant filched from somebody else, there a tag of ornament picked up by chance.

She appealed to Pat.

"Just what would you say was in the public mind? What do they want now? International relations?"

He nodded, glancing up at his brother with a gleam in his eye but a face otherwise grave. Old Jack, he knew, must have a fair knowledge of the real Amy, but they could not in decency share it.

"Maybe," he said. "And psychology, the kind you can use in the home, bring up your children by and tabulate the yeggman."

Amy assented. Templeton was looking at her gravely. wondering how far Pat could draw her on.

Was he going to encourage her in some new venture of teaching the popular patter? He liked the alliterative sound of that.

"Popular Patter for Parlors," he offered.

Pat smiled, but Amy was unresponsive. She had formulated her own idea. She was electrified by it.

"John," said she, turning upon him as if he were withholding a secret she must, in fairness, have, "do you remember Sally's imaginary playmate?"

Did he not? and the more vividly from Sally's shy little confidence the other day about her unseen visitants. But he paltered. Sally wasn't going to be brought into any of their cheap esoterics.

"All children have fancies of that sort," said he. "Sally was much like the rest."

"Not at all," returned Amy. "She was a very imaginative child. I should call her psychic decidedly. Pat, shouldn't you call her psychic?"

"Sally's a lovely thing," said he, not committing himself. Pat was not the man to venture between matrimonial scissor-blades.

"What I mean is," said Amy to her husband, "does she remember it? And does she have any such experiences now? Why, Sally could take up that sort of thing. A very little reading and then her own testimony. That would give weight to it. I really believe——"

"Believe nothing of the sort," said Templeton roughly. She started a little and opened her eyes at him. He had never spoken so to her. Whatever his inner revolt, he was, to her, a mild-mannered man. "Because it won't happen."

"But, dear," said she, "Sally ought to be allowed to express——"

He cut in upon her.

"I won't have Sally exploited. I simply won't have it. And you needn't fuss her up about it because I shall take the precaution of speaking to her myself. I shall tell her I won't stand for it."

He had not been so moved in years. Through this middle part of his life he had been forlorn, bewildered and amused at himself for his unpicturesque attitude, but there had not seemed to be anything quite worth anger. Before he felt the inevitable reaction of a slight shame over a temperamental outburst perhaps too extreme, where, after all, he had the game in his own hands, Pat spoke from his pleasing attitude of tolerance:

"That's all right, old man, but Sally might like it, you know. Women do."

"She won't have a chance to like it," said Templeton.

He got up, knocked out his pipe and left the room, without a glance at Amy. But he could imagine her as merely thoughtful, still wondering how she might actually bring it about, and he heard her pencil tapping the table before her. He knew that pencil tapping. It accompanied her wrestlings with the problems of public life. For an instant, in the hall, he wondered whether he should find Sally and prime her against her destiny. But he did want to cool off first. So he got his hat and went out, stopped a minute to interrogate the sky and then took the path to the back road.

The night was clear, and he knew every foot of his way. In summer he could have named it from point to point, by floral guide-posts: here in this damp gully Joe Pye flourished, and here golden-rod came earliest. But in winter it was as familiar to his feet, and he could have told you, long beforehand, when you were going to strike the ledge in the middle of the road where no road-mender had ever been able to shave it off, and, in the darkest night, where you might make a misstep down the violet bank by keeping the bordering path. As he reached the Hilliards' and came out into the road, he saw a light in the front room and gave a friendly thought to Elizabeth, sitting there at her task, the gods of ancient Rome regnant in a modern farmhouse. He went on for a couple of miles, and suddenly became aware that he was angry no longer. The night air had purged his mind. The stars informed him Sally would be safe enough while they ruled earthly destinies. And as he thought whimsically of the stars who seem so kind merely because they are so far off, he heard voices, a man's foolish laughter and a woman, pleading. He was almost upon them and he knew exactly where they were: opposite the witch hazel, always a thing of magic in the fall. He halted, wondering if the woman were in trouble and he could help her, or if, assuming this to be her husband, she would rather he should go by on the other side leaving her poor pride inviolate. The drunken voice was a good-natured one. It trolled a stave of some banality about "My baby," and the woman broke in upon it:

"Keep still. See where you're draggin' me. I can't

get you along if you hang onto me so, not any ways in the world."

Templeton went on. Not the words but the quality of the voices decided him. There they were, advancing toward him, the man with his arm about the woman, pulling her on while she held back with all her strength. Templeton stopped in front of them and the man lurched backward. It was Big Jim.

"Hands up!" said Jim, and laughed uproariously. "Stick 'em up. Is this a hold up? Be I holdin' up you or be you holdin' me?"

The woman tried again to pull herself away from him, and Templeton put his hand on the arm about her waist, freed her and took the impact of Big Jim's lurch. But she did not accept her freedom.

"You better go," she said to Templeton imploringly, and he knew her voice.

It was Eunice Hilliard.

"You're not his wife," he said, in the way of argument against her interference. "Go home."

This seemed to amuse Jim. He was not quarrelsome. Everything about the encounter amused him.

"That's a good one," he commented. "Not my wife? She's my girl anyways." He continued discoursing on the relative value of girls and wives, while Templeton put an arm through his and started him along the road.

"Go home," he said again, to Eunice. "This is no business of yours. I'll get him to his house."

She fell back, and the two men went on, Jim babbling happily in the intervals of song; but once when

they stopped, after a lurch and recovery, Templeton looked behind and saw she was still following. Why were women such fools, he asked himself, spurred on by a mad solicitude for some brute's safety? Let him fall by the roadside, if he must, and sleep it off. But with the dictates of civilised manners in his mind and that stealthy devotion trailing him, there was nothing for it but to take the fellow along and up the path to the little dark house where he knocked on the door with Jim, not singing now, but filled with affectionate concern at having brought him out of his way. Templeton knocked again and again, and found no response. Jim lifted up his voice and lamented.

"She's gone," he babbled. "Gone! Said she would. All over! Gone!"

Templeton tried the door, and found it locked, and the master of the house fell to his knees fumbling under a stone: that was for the key. Templeton found it, helped him to his feet, propelled him into the little front room and released him at the edge of a sofa where he sank, still declaring his certainty that she was gone. Templeton called out twice, in case somebody was upstairs, and then concluding there was no woman to be troubled, went out pursued by Jim's adjurations to stay and make a night of it, shut the outer door and turned back toward home.

Where was Eunice? He called, but she did not answer. Evidently he was to see no more of her and, if she was so daring a night prowler, he had no compunction about leaving her to find her way. But at the lone pine that darkens the road he had, with that keen sense of his, a feeling that she was in a clump

of bushes within a few feet of him, waiting for him to pass. He went on without pausing, his mind turning now, from the tawdry incident, to Elizabeth. This was it, then. In the light of these disclosures he understood that other night when he found her flying along the road, in search no doubt of this fool of a woman, no wanton, it was easy to see from the glimpses he had had of her, but a creature warped somehow into a strange devotion and, with an ignorant intensity, committing herself to it heart and soul. Tortured, sad Elizabeth, bound to her classics and bound also to combat this warfare of the emotions unrelieved by the beauty enwrapping human passion in books! He stopped. Surely the woman had somehow gone ahead and turned to meet him. A figure was fleeting toward him. He paused. It was not the mother, but Elizabeth. He called, to reassure her.

"That you, Elizabeth? Come back with me." He stopped before her. "The moon'll be down in half an hour. No fun walking in the dark."

"No," she said. Her voice trembled. He could believe her face was wet with tears. "I've got an errand."

"No," said Templeton quietly. He had decided for her. He saw her alone with her trouble, all her apprehensions turned inward upon what might well be her savage heart. After all, she was no older than Sally. How careless the gods could be, how lacking in common kindliness, to allow the torture of the young! "There's no use in your going on. She's coming somewhere behind me. Go home before she gets there. She's worn out, too."

Elizabeth gave a little moan. She turned and went

on with him. Templeton was wondering what further he could say.

"Why not," he said tentatively, "come back with me and go upstairs into the north chamber? Nobody would know. I'd tell Sally in the morning. Mrs. Templeton is very busy to-night. She won't notice."

"Of course she is busy," Elizabeth's suddenly angry heart was answering. "She doesn't care what happens so long as she can pack a bag full of papers and run."

Amy had been kind to her in an absent fashion, and they were both hunting the intellectual ideal; yet Elizabeth had not failed to judge her. She was trying to fit herself into the very mould that had turned out an irreproachable Amy, but this did not predispose her to charity for a woman indifferent to a man so noble in manner, looks and mind. To her also, as to his own world, he was Dear Old Templeton.

"Come," said he, after a moment, as they went on. "You will, won't you?"

It all came back upon her with a rush. The dykes were down. The rift made by his grave kindliness had broken them. She could not go with him. She knew it so well that it was futile to say so. The rush of her ungoverned grief was overwhelming her.

"It is horrible," she cried. "Are there such things in all of us? Are they in me?"

Here was her intellectual egotism. She had tried so hard. She had never seen the highest without striving for it. But was she also human—and bestial, as the human seemed to be? Templeton sent his mind hurrying back over all he had heard about the family. Of Eunice he knew really nothing, except

that she had flaming eyes. But there were stories of miserly Old Hilliard, true to type and picturesque enough to be remembered.

"Why, yes, Elizabeth," he said, putting her again in Sally's place. "It's in all of us. It's in Juliet, loving her lover in pure poetry. It's in the clean animals. It's in the men and women that are a step below the animals because they've forgotten what it's possible to be."

He heard a little strangled sob. Her mind, unmercifully alert, threw at her, as if with an evil scorn, the name she had heard the country people fasten on light women, and bade her remember this was her own mother. It was true, the jeering innuendo, and she accepted it with anguish. Templeton went on.

"And it's in a woman who hasn't—perhaps—had any happiness in her whole life. If it's affection that's offered her, it looks like happiness, and when a thing begins to look like happiness it blinds us. It brings all the devils round us, dancing their devils' dance; but they look like angels."

"But that—things like that—" she panted. "They are dreadful. Is it—is that what it means?—is it love?"

Love! he found himself faced with a mystery like the mystery named God. There was the long procession of ages to show her, the purpose of creation —which he did not himself know—the hungers and satisfactions that keep life alive. But still she was Sally to him, and he had to meet her somehow.

"Elizabeth!" he said. He invoked the dignity of words; she loved them, ignorantly. Strange how you

had to be a little declamatory sometimes, to carry your point! The stage, the drama, always the drama in human things! "There is one star, and we call it love. We are lucky if we have the star itself and not its reflection in some pool or nasty ooze. But love is love. Don't blame the poor devils that stumble into the horse-pond and make a splash that spoils the pretty star. There was its reflection, just the same, only they've been unlucky and broken it into bits you can't see by any more. But still it was the star."

He was not sure whether she was listening; it was true that she became instantly exalted. And so vehemently was her mind working that it had energy for a thousand impressions beyond the one he made. This, it told her, was what he thought of love. This was what he gave that blond woman trailing off to her clubs and leaving his house to fall into disarray. Some answer seemed demanded of her, if only by his incredible kindness in drawing her up with him to the heights where, as she believed, he himself lived.

"I'll remember," she found herself saying. "I'll try."

Yet, though he did not know this, she was not promising to remember to be gentle with the foolish night wanderer somewhere behind them, but to remember that love, the star, was beautiful and she would adore it and, in adoring, always remember him.

"So," said Templeton, with a drop to the everyday voice she knew, "you come along with me, and get hold of yourself and have a good sleep."

This she still refused. It was part of her shyness with him, with Sally, with them all, because they had

a place by right in the sort of life where she was alien.

"No," she said. They had come to her mother's house. "I thank you kindly." This was her stiff little formula, childishly rigid and sincere.

She went quickly up the path, and he waited to hear the closing of the door. Then he walked on, rueful because he had only floundered about among romantic commonplaces, and what avail was that?

But Elizabeth was not unhappy. He had turned her darkness to a struggling light: a little parable about a star, a grave voice telling her, quietly as if she were a child, with authority, so that she had to believe. There was a lighted lamp on the front room table. She carried it to the mirror between the two windows and looked herself in the eyes, and thought as she had never thought in her life before. She was beautiful. Before this she had regarded her face gravely, as she did her hair, to see that they were neat, her mind meantime on a Latin conjugation or the formulæ of inhibitions and complexes; but now her dark eyes flamed and her mouth trembled into a lovely curve. "Love!" she said to herself. "Love! love!" and she meant the star and faithfulness to the star; but really in her heart was the grave, strong being who also worshiped it.

Enoch, in his stockinged feet, standing in the kitchen staring at her, worried as a woman about the two nice folks he "set by" as if they were his own, stole noiselessly up to bed and gave up watching for the night. They were too much for him. Eunice had been out all over the lot, crazed as a lucivee, and now here was

Elizabeth, afire herself somehow, he didn't know how. He'd have to go chopping in the morning. Now he'd got to sleep. Elizabeth might have heard him, but she was too absorbed in her new flaming world that was a star. She, too, went to bed and curiously now the star was so small that she seemed to be holding it to her breast. She fell asleep happily, but in the night she woke suddenly with the thought: "How I looked when I saw myself in the glass! My eyes were just like mother's."

When Templeton got home, Sally, bundled in a fur cloak, was waiting for him on the east porch. She ran down to him with a little noiseless rush, took his arm and held him still a moment. She spoke in an undertone, but he saw how excited she really was.

"Father, you didn't tell?"

He knew what she meant. Amy had approached her with some bedeviling scheme for exploitation of her childish mind, and his answering irritation warned him to be calm.

"The playmates? No, darling, no."

"You won't?" said Sally, as if she were relieved, as if she had expected to be, and yet was grateful to him for assuring her.

"No," said he. "Never. We won't either of us tell."

Not speaking again, they went in together, and he noted that she stole softly up the back stairs. It looked as if she judged it best not to see mother again just now.

XV

Templeton was worried, not only by his wife's threatened appropriation of Sally, but by Sally herself. She was another creature from the girl who had left them for what should have been an enchanted freedom abroad. It had been time for her to go, the moment of youth to be enriched by wandering. He would have liked her to go properly guided in the old-fashioned way; but that was impossible. Amy would have said she couldn't take her. How could she leave her public activities? And Templeton would not for all he owned have had her do it. He knew what would have come of it: a fervid pilgrimage from gallery to gallery and anxious social rites with desirable people casually met. It was better, all things considered, for the two girls, in their panoply of courage, to meet the old world as youth was doing everywhere. Sally had grown up in an intrepid security of mind. She had served gallantly through the war, a steady daily pull at a relief station. She had dealt with all sorts of people and inherent difficulties. There wasn't much, he had been used to reflect with pride, that would surprise Sally, and nothing she knew had smirched her. Yet now she was different. She had come back unrefreshed by other skies, and, finding new perplexities awaiting her, she was depressed by them, if not overthrown. Curious, he thought, that

nothing in this world could be done and over with. Even Sally, lovely, piquing task that she had always been, wasn't done, a flower opened to the sky and only to be rejoiced in. She was a crisis he had to meet.

The next night he set about it, and instead of following Amy to the library, tapped Sally on the arm and said to her:

"Get your coat and come on out. I'm going on a prowl."

If Amy heard, she was too preoccupied to question, and Templeton had Sally outside and she was asking, "Which way?" A belated summer warmth touched them delicately and the air was all a scent of ripened apples. Templeton took her hand and they ran down the steps.

"I just wanted to get you to myself," said he. "Let's go up and sit on the boulder."

They ran along the road and mounted the two natural steps up the boulder, a rock big enough, Templeton said, for a philanthropist's tombstone, and the wild grape threaded through the branches behind them doubly sweetened the sweet air. Templeton did not propose approaching her confidence by deviations. If he did that, the moments would pass and the task might never be done. Besides, Sally deserved a candor clearer than such managing ways. So after they were seated on the boulder, each with a rocky smoothness for an elbow, he began:

"Well, Sally, what about it?"

Sally regarded him with an equal candor. She might have said: "What about what?" and deferred the issue, but she understood him and answered:

"I know it. You think I'm going to be bothered about this invisible playmate business. Well, I'm not. That is, only a little till it blows over. For of course I can't do it. I couldn't any more—" Here she stopped, and he knew she was seeking some magnitude of comparison.

"It isn't that altogether," said he. "It's you. You're a different Sally from what I expected."

"I know," said she gravely.

"Sally," said her father, "is it a man?" And, saying that, he knew he was afraid of the answer, for if it were love, it was not a fortunate one.

"No," said she, "not exactly. It's May Wellman's man. Or rather it's her men."

"What's that to you?" said Templeton. She had, he told himself, been meddling with troublesome things.

"I rather think I'd better tell you the whole story," said she, as if she considered the possibility of what it might mean to him. "I wonder if I can do it so you'll see! It's May, father. She's living with a man, over there. They're not married. But it's what May wanted. It's a trial marriage, you know, that kind."

"Oh!" said Templeton grimly. "That kind, is it?" But he felt an immense relief. Whatever eccentricity of behavior had muddled the fate of May, over there in Paris, Sally was beside him on the boulder and she was safe. But was she safe? Was she, too, infected by the raw materialism of the time and had she, too, loved a man who had tempted her to marriage of "that kind"? Not to accepting it, he thought: he knew the upright spine of pure common-sense that made Sally

what she was, and it was not for him to fear she would forsake the old lines the edifice of life is built on. But was she somehow tinged by the melancholy of regret? Again she understood him.

"No," said she. "I haven't. It's really May."

"What do you bother for?"

"It isn't that, so much as that I've known them all. I've been right in the midst of it, and it's—somehow it's made things different."

Templeton waited. He hoped she would go on willingly.

"And you see," said Sally, "he wasn't the only one. There were two others before."

"Two men?"

"Yes. She was in love with them. She thought she was. And they lived together, quite simply, you know, travelled together. We were in the Tyrol with the first one and in Switzerland with the other. And that was the same sort of thing. They wanted to marry her, both of them. May's tremendously attractive. And each time she thought she was in love; but she wanted to be sure it was the highest thing possible, and so she insisted on a trial marriage. And each time it was a failure. It wasn't her fault, you see. She'd been mistaken."

Templeton felt nothing more complex than anger. Here was his girl, all goodness and a childlike honesty, and she had been elbow to elbow for months with a sticky travesty. He did not restrain himself.

"The girl's a slut," said he.

"Oh, no!" said Sally earnestly. "I haven't told it right, or you'd see. May believes in developing your-

self, the freedom of the individual, that sort of thing. And they thought she was perfectly right, those two men, till they got her. And then queer things began to happen. May's impulsive, you know; she's temperamental. They didn't like it. They weren't advanced themselves. One was a student—he'd gone abroad on a scholarship—and the other, the second, was an artist of sorts. But they'd promised her perfect freedom, you see, and when—oh, I can't explain it. You know."

"Perfectly," said Templeton. "She was quite happy with Number One until she met Number Two and her right to freedom gave her the right of intimacy with Number Three."

"No! no!" cried Sally, distressed not more by his words than his tone.

"Yes! yes! Intimacy. Number One was naturally jealous. Jealousy's a good normal passion, mind you. So was Number Two when she turned her back on him for a high-minded intimacy with Number Three. And Three, if he is still in favor, runs every chance of being supplanted by Number Four."

Again she was distressed.

"You don't really understand," she said. "May is different. She has a charm. Some women have, you know. She can't help men's falling in love with her. No, you could even call May helpless, and that's why she gets into holes and has to get herself out by doing these things you and I don't like."

"Helpless!" said Templeton. "A woman of that type is about as helpless as a Hyrcanian tiger."

"If she wasn't helpless," said Sally obstinately, "she wouldn't make so many mistakes. And it's the mistakes that are so tragic. All she can do is to get out of them the best way she can."

"Bosh!" said Templeon. "Likewise fiddlesticks. Likewise rot. No, no, you needn't squirm. I don't care anything about May. All I care about is the way she affects you. You've hated their precious atmosphere, now haven't you?"

Sally had tears in her voice.

"It's only," said she, "that things don't seem to be what I supposed they were. May's so intelligent. She's thought it all out. And she's read such a lot."

"I know," said Templeton, still grimly. "I know their catchwords: inhibition, and reaction, and suppressed desires and—O Lord!"

"Yes, of course you've read it," said Sally. "But I haven't, and—O father, I'm an awful fool!"

"Old sweetness!" said Templeton, and she was encouraged to go on.

"It isn't that. I'm willing to be a fool. Only I began to see I hadn't known anything about life—ever. Don't you remember what a lot of poetry you read me when I was little?"

"I know," said her father. "I read you things you couldn't possibly understand, just for the beauty of words. I wanted you to be set to music from the first. And it's about the only thing I ever succeeded in. When I looked at you I used to think,

> 'And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Shall pass into her face.'

"And it did, Sally. That was your face."

"It isn't my face now," said she.

"Not precisely," said he. "There's discontent, grief. O Sally, what makes it? You don't want to meddle with those things. Isn't one ravening fool of a woman enough."

"I tell you," said Sally passionately, "I began to see the things they wanted me to see, and it was all different. The poetry you read me—that was mystery and love—and worship. Men adored women. They didn't think they were just another kind of animal. They thought they were—lovely. I even—O father, you won't laugh!—I even tried to be lovely myself, so if sometime somebody thought I was—Romeo, you know, Sir Philip Sidney—I shouldn't disappoint him."

Templeton felt the sudden sting of tears.

"No," said he soberly, "you won't disappoint him."

"But I shall," said she. "Because he'll be like all the rest of them, and he'll want me to be like them, too. It's no place for me, father, this world isn't."

"Nor me either, my own child," said Templeton, conscious of a wild gratitude at finding her likeminded with him. "Sally, I'm going to write a book about it. How this new tabulation of the soul hasn't explained it in any degree. How the soul they think they've run to earth and dissected is sitting inside us making her own tranquillity. How being is everlastingly mysterious and always will be, and the one who adores the mystery most and without questioning, is the one who gets nearest it. If I write it very well, Sally, very simply, not as I've written anything so far but, as you might say, a kind of one man record—will you believe then?

Will you worship the mystery and not be downcast when you hear them say they've touched the sacred symbols and found out they're only common bread and wine? Will you, Sally?"

She put her hand into his.

"Is the mystery," she asked, in an awed voice, "God?"

"I don't know," said Templeton. "It's so much of a mystery that though I've thought about it all my life, in one way or another, I don't come anywhere near knowing. But one thing I do know. The folks you and I see to-day are trying to live by bread alone, and it can't be done."

"But they're honest," said Sally. She always wanted to be just. "The ones I've told you about, they think they're more honest than I am, braver. They say I shirk things and take refuge in—oh, I don't know what."

"Never mind," said Templeton, in the words he had used to her when she was little and the usages of an unfamiliar world had plagued her. "Never mind."

They sat silent for a while and then Sally asked, with some hesitancy:

"Did you notice that girl the other night, the one at the Calverts'?"

"Irene Renfrew? Yes. I'd seen her before. I know them slightly. They're all right, but more money than brains. The mother's of good stock and tries to be loyal to it, in a fumbling sort of way, but the girl's rather rackety, I believe."

"Well," said Sally, "there you have it. She's just like May, only not so clever. And not so strong either.

May has a kind of nervous strength that will carry her through. But this girl! She might go to pieces any minute."

"She's a poor little neurotic atom," agreed Templeton. "I don't see what that fine fellow could want of her."

"But he doesn't," said Sally instantly. "He doesn't want anything. Only she's fastened herself on him. That's what they do, father, lots of them. And they tell you it's what women always did, only they were such sneaks they never let on. They hid behind womanliness and fans and fainting fits and corsets. And I just don't believe it. Mother never did that."

"No," agreed Templeton gravely. "Mother never did."

But he sought back along the years, almost fearful of what he should find. What was Amy in those days before there was any Sally on the spot? A loveliness like the dawn, an aspiration, a straining forward after life, more life. And then the world caught her as it was whirling toward what now is, and dinned its catchwords into her ears, and she, too, began chanting them, and gradually she withered into the Amy of to-day. But on no account was Amy's daughter to suspect that her mother was less bewitching to him than she had been when he was her all and there was no Sally on earth. He wheeled the talk abruptly to another quarter.

"As to the young man: we can't do anything about him. He's not our hunt."

"But he's so handsome!" said Sally ingenuously. "And so soft inside. He's hard enough on the outside

sulky, too! but his heart is as soft as a woman's: as women's hearts used to be when mother was young. And that girl will fasten on him. She's fastened already. I could see it. Her claws have sunk in."

"Yes," said Templeton. "She's a harpy, all right. And a man's no chance with 'em. The only thing to do is to run."

"Couldn't you," said Sally wistfully, "take him abroad? Would he be in your way?"

Templeton laughed out.

"Very much," said he drily. "No, Sally, we can't rescue handsome young men with doting fathers and fat bank accounts."

"I would," said Sally promptly. "And I will, too, if I get a chance. I can do lots of things other girls can't, you know, because I don't fall in love with men. And mostly they don't fall in love with me."

Templeton thought they had gone far enough into the destiny of the handsome young man, and wondered if he could tell her there was a crying need nearer home.

"There's our Elizabeth," he ventured. "You give her a thought now and then. Be nice to her. She's tragedy, if you're looking for that, stark country stuff you don't see often now. Get a laugh out of her and you'll have done something."

"Why, yes," said Sally, wondering a little. "I'm nice to Elizabeth."

XVI

"Come," said Templeton, "let's go home."

He was relieved, though sobered. Sally had no young man even in her dreams, but she had led a miserable life abroad. Her enchanted pilgrimage had turned into a rout with bacchanals whose ways were not hers, and she was none the better for it. They had dragged her up the mountain of desire and she was frightened. Had they smirched her young innocence? He had wanted her childhood whiteness to flush slowly into life, but he had never thought the mysteries would be translated to her by half-baked intellectuals living by crass formulæ and seeing no deeper into life than the skin of it they touched. How could he recall her? Lost Sally, that was what she was, a child of light kidnapped and carried off into the dark forest that is of the earth and not the sky. He had to think it out.

They went on, not speaking, and slipped into the house with an agreeing quietness. There were voices in the library. Pat was holding forth, and they went in to find him with Amy and Champ. Sally blushed richly, and Templeton, knowing why, hoped Amy had not noted the mantling color and been even temporarily heartened. For certainly Amy would want her to marry Champ. If Barbarossa's horsemen rose at their feet her eyes would dart over them to select a husband for Sally, with an eye on a future likelihood

of selling them tickets to a lecture course. And if she married off Sally to youth and millions, would she be content? No. Sally would have to select schemes of public activity the while she brought up her children by some arid book. These renegades of thought flashed through his mind as he stood for a second in the doorway, taking in the three at their social ease. Amy was a delightful hostess, with the tact to lay aside her anxious preoccupations, though only for the time. Champ, who looked dulled out and worried, seemed an unlikely suitor as he greeted Sally and moved his chair to give her place, and Templeton concluded that, if he was to marry her, he was far from knowing it. Pat was going on with his story.

"It's your story really, Sally," he said, "the one about—" He mentioned the name of an English writer widely known.

"But I don't tell it," said Sally. "I only told it to you. I'm afraid of its getting into print, and he's such a dear.

"Oh, go ahead," said Pat. "It's probably in print already. I've told it at probably thirty luncheons and ten Women's Clubs. Go ahead."

"It's only," said Sally uncomfortably, "an instance of putting a foot in it. Any of us might have done the same thing over here, but May and I were just in the mood to think everything was funny, and it seemed to us so typical of her. She's a Gorgon, you know, and everybody knows it."

"Well," prompted Pat, "you went there, you and May——"

"Yes. May had made three or four illustrations for

his Time and Tide, and she wanted to get the job for the *edition de luxe*. She'd written him and asked if he'd look at some of her work; but he never answered, and this time she went in person. I went with her. A nice maid came to the door. We got the impression we were expected, and just as we stepped in out came madam from the drawing-room: Victorian, long skirt, nipped-in waist."

"High nose, corkscrew curls, gimlet eyes," supplemented Pat. "I've seen her. She's a caution."

"May held out her drawings and began to explain, but before she got the chance madam called to the maid, just vanishing, 'Susan, these are not the ladies. Don't make the tea.' It's a silly story," said Sally, suddenly struck by its slenderness, "but it took us just right, and when we'd got out we clutched each other and giggled all the way to Regent Street. Certainly, so far as we were concerned, Susan didn't make the tea."

Templeton laughed with the others, but he supplemented:

"I want to know, 'did he hit the owl?' Did May get her commission?"

"Oh, yes, it was arranged finally through a friend; but we never got any tea."

"There's a picture of him in the east room," said Amy. "Take Mr. Calvert in there, Sally, and show it to him."

Again Sally flushed, but with irritation, and the corners of her mouth were briefly eloquent. She knew what Champ was thinking. This was the exact duplication of the ruse by which his father had sought to

isolate them. Was youth so independent, after all, she wondered, with mothers and fathers guiding them to each other's arms?

"It's nothing to see," she said wilfully, not moving. "It's been in all the magazines."

Amy gave her a grave glance, half surprise and the other half negligible, being too mild for rebuke, and Champ cut in cheerfully:

"I don't mind not seeing the picture, Mrs. Templeton; but there's something I do want. Father's fallen in love, smash, bang, head over heels. You could hear the splash. It's with your daughter. And he's had a saddle horse sent out and I'm to take her to ride. Only because he can't. He loves the idea of it, but a horse gives him cold feet nowadays. May she? To-morrow morning?" he added, turning to Sally. "Start about seven and have breakfast at the Inn."

Nobody heard what Amy said. Templeton knew it must be unqualified assent, and thought Sally ought to be thankful if her mother didn't vapor off into gratitude. But Sally's eyes were fixed on Champ in an enraptured incredulity the young man found surprising.

"Ride!" said she. "Of course I will. I'd rather ride than fly—I mean with my own wings, not your old air-planes. Did your father really think of me? What a duck he is."

"He sure did," said Champ. "I'll turn up about seven and we'll ride round to be inspected, and when he sees you trotting along on his mare he'll be the proudest ever. He doesn't want much, but when he does he wants it bad."

With that, he said good night and got out of the room with a quickness Amy found well-bred. She was prone to deplore the tediousness of wandering last words. Sally got up and walked about the room, exclaiming:

"Wasn't that dear of him? Mother!" She stopped before Amy and bent upon her a mischievous eye. "Mother! Suppose he did"—she halted in simulated confusion—"what if he did like me, like me very much? How about it, mother?"

"You don't mean," said Amy seriously, "Mr. Stephen Calvert? You mean the son?"

"The son?" repeated Sally, with a gesture of magnificent scorn. "That kid just out of his pram? No, Stephen Calvert! Mother, how about it?"

Amy turned to her husband.

"John," she asked, in a perfect seriousness, "how old is Mr. Calvert?"

Then Sally, her father and even Pat, scrupulously tolerant of Amy's proclivities, burst into laughter and she gravely looked at them.

"Oh," said she, "you're chaffing me, I suppose."

Sally flew to give her a repentant kiss.

"Pulling your leg, dearest," said Sally. "That neat silk-stockinged leg. But he's a darling person. I might do worse."

Singing softly to herself, she got her book, and Templeton thought rather wistfully how she had been brightened by ten minutes of youth in the room. He wished he could ask Pat about these things. Pat was so universally knowing. But after the women had gone

to bed, Pat asked him something. They had risen to follow, and now Templeton stood by the fire, knocking out his pipe. Pat closed his book, as if he had done with it for the night.

"Don't go yet," said he. "Sit down a minute."

It was a soft, rather a luring tone. Templeton, absently noting it, smiled a little to himself. This was the way Pat spoke when he wanted something, in a grave monotone not likely to be noticed by the bird in the bush.

"Jack," he went on, "that was uncommonly interesting, what you told me the other day."

"What did I tell you?"

Templeton had not meant to smoke any more, but now he absently began filling his pipe.

"About you, the Adventurer, you know, the Pilgrim, whatever you call him, the man who escapes from modern life and goes out as Christian went, to find the Eternal City."

Templeton never thought it was because Pat hypnotised him that he talked so much that night; it was his own scheme constraining him. It had seemed to possess him of late, and to-night he had got to the point of wanting somebody to talk to, somebody who would understand, in a professional way, and not, like Sally, be broken-hearted for him if it never saw the light.

"It would simply be," he said, "the discovery of a new world. Men found this one, not merely because the dreamers thought there was land to the west, but because they all, and the ones that came after them,

had to have a world, 'brand-fire new.' It was all a question of loot and high spirits, of course, but there was more. It was the discontent that goes with the thing you've seen too often, where the sun rises out of the same vapors and sets on your old illusions. And now the world's charted, and the explorer has to turn his eyes inward. For he's got to burst out of bonds somewhere. He wouldn't be an explorer, else."

"He has burst out pretty vigorously, within the last few years," said Pat, watching him. "Take his new psychology and his catchwords generally."

"That's it," said Templeton. "But he hasn't got anywhere. He's just gone into his laboratory and pulled the door to after him, and there he sits writing out what he thinks are his new formulæ in neat books, and he's forgotten—forgotten——"

"What has he forgotten?" asked Pat, in the quiet voice that meant his brother was not to be hindered until he had told all.

Templeton glanced up at him perplexedly, the look of the dreamer thick on his face and his puzzled eyes seeming to indicate he might like to escape from it all: the burden of telling what was not ready to be told. For it is a curious hesitancy in man that what the imagination projects, as any form of art, must be looked at obliquely until the mind, in its austere removedness, chooses to do the work in its own way. At first it can hardly be communicated from one mind to another. There seems to be a secrecy, very perplexing but to be respected. And though Templeton's dream rose before him like a temple or an isle-haunted sea, when he caught it through the eyes of emotion it was enchant-

ingly plain to him; but when he looked straight at it, to paint the picture of it in words, it was a nebulous waste, alluring, but still a waste.

"I'll be hanged if I know," said he, as troubled as if Pat had to be told. "I fancy it's somehow to get back to the roots of the world. There might be a place, you know, untouched by these clumsy modern fingers, there might be a temple where men still worshiped the Unknown God, and not the manikin in their own insides. The Pilgrim—he might find the temple. I don't know."

"Tell about the temple," said Pat quietly. "What would he find there?"

"He might find the signs of an ancient worship, the altar, the sacred vessels, the tombs of the heroic dead. But nobody living. And yet he'd know he'd got to something more tremendous than any of the cocksure things he'd left. For he'd come to mystery, the never-dying."

"Do you see the temple in your own mind?" asked Pat.

"Oh, yes, I see the temple. I never did before, but now you ask me I see it. Why, by Jove, Pat! it isn't a temple. It's out-doors. It's the sky and the trees, and where I thought the altar was is the sound of the sea. But it's the temple. It's the Unknown God."

"Well," said Pat, "if all he finds is the Unknown God, he hasn't got any forrarder, has he? He's gone back instead of forward. There was always an Unknown God."

"There isn't any going back," said Templeton. "It's

going round in a circle and coming on the same things from the other side. There's your explorer again."

"I'm bothered about the temple," said Pat. "If it's all out-doors, how is any part of out-doors more sacred than the rest of it?"

"There are processions," said Templeton, "processions of races, miles long, miles upon miles and years upon years. Centuries upon centuries. They're crowned with flowers, some of them. Sometimes there are sacrifices—blood. But always, mind you, the god they worship is the Unknown God. And that's the difference between my Pilgrim and the rest of us. We have discovered electricity and a few other exciting facts, but we have forgotten we are surrounded by a mystery as impenetrable as if we hadn't made an electric light bulb and couldn't talk about complexes."

"But whether it's out-doors or not, when your Pilgrim's got to his temple what has he found there? Can't he worship his Unknown God at home?"

"Life!" said Templeton, in a voice of profound calm. "He has found eternal life."

He had laid down his pipe, and now he was looking into the coals as if he saw the altar of his dreams. Pat, after watching him a moment and concluding he had finished all that could be drawn out of him, got up and slipped quietly out of the room and upstairs. From his room he listened to hear his brother come up and found it was after one.

XVII

The next morning, when Champ clattered up the drive with the eight feet of her horse and his, it was a shy Sally he found. Her spirits had stayed at a dancing pitch until she went to her room and got out her mother's old riding-habit, somewhat moth-eaten but still serviceable. What a shameful affair it was, made before girls had the freedom of their legs! She put it on and glanced down at it in a comical disgust, went to bed to cry and decided to sleep instead, and when morning came awoke to the fun of it. "He must take me as I am," she thought, "but he'll be ashamed of me, and it'll all be over." What was to be over was the invisible rampart she meant to build up between him and Irene. But perhaps a moth-eaten, wrinkle-suited scarecrow could do it more guilelessly than one who was Irene's peer. Frumps are negligible. They do not put a man on his guard. Sally had understood from May that it is disastrous to let the hunted suspect his danger. The net must be invisible. You may even entangle him for an appreciable time before he knows he has even shortened his stride, which accounts for the sexual triumph of certain historic bluestockings. Men innocently accept them for what they look, comrades as good as men and kinder; meantime the frump is weaving her web, and crash! he falls into it, amazedly floored by her passion and his own.

Champ, as Sally felt tempted to tell him, had done her honor this morning in that he had omitted to wear his scowl. He seemed entirely suited with her, and she hurried a little to mount, really because she thought she might be less of a spectacle in the saddle than standing where he could see her full length. She raced him down the drive and along the road, and seemed altogether very impetuous in the pursuit of pleasure, in a hurry to overtake it. But Sally was perfectly conscious of her nervous haste and knew it was because she had the feeling of running away from something, and the something was her hated clothes. They weren't to go over to the Calverts', it seemed, for Mr. Calvert to see her on his horse. He had recommended that they turn in at the Calvert woods and try the road he had laid out there, hardly a road, though as wide, but a bridle path. It had been done since Sally went abroad, and they had not got far in the green shade before she was enchanted. The sun was still low, but there were dapples of light and necromancies of evergreen, and suddenly she was very happy and pulled in her horse to a walk.

"O my stars!" said she.

"Like it?" asked Champ. She laughed a little and he knew she did. Also, he seemed to know just how she liked it, not in a way to make her challenge speed and eat up space, but as the gentler animals like their lives. "You're so different," he said, and had not meant to say it.

But thinking aloud seemed natural with her. It shook her out of her dream and she laughed and

Champ, out of his dream, looked at her for the reason, and the horses put up their four ears a second, and then, realising there wasn't anything to be got out of humans, gave up trying and lagged a little more.

"I know why," said Sally. He might as well hear the worst. "It's my skirt. It's awful, you know. I'm a perfect sight."

"Your skirt?" inquired Champ. "What's the matter with it? If you ask me, you look lovely. But you're the sort of person—well, I never should think of your looks."

Exactly how he meant this he had not thought, but to Sally it was perhaps the worst thing she had ever had to bear. Men had never looked at her in the way they looked at May. Often they hardly seemed to know her from another boy, and she liked that best; but if it meant she lacked the something that makes women beloved, she was sorry. It hurt extraordinarily. In the mortification of the moment, she remembered the time when May said to her, of a certain man they knew: "He's really crazy about you, only he doesn't know it." And she went on to imply that it was for Sally herself to break the film that hid her from him, and said to her fiercely: "Why don't you let yourself go?" Sally had frozen instantly. There was nothing she could say in answer; but she felt herself colder as she looked May in the gleaming eyes that seemed to reproach her for ignoring the weapons of their common womanhood.

"Don't," said she, against her will, since she had not meant to answer at all. "If that is what you think

about things, I wish—I don't know what I wish, but I never want to look at a man again."

And shortly after that she wrote her mother saying she was coming home.

"What is it?" Champ was asking, with concern. "What have I said?"

Sally turned to him a face he found suddenly grave.

"It wasn't you," she answered. "Don't you know how a word can make you think of things? I thought of something. In Paris, it was. I was pretty homesick there."

"You know," said Champ, "you're like a kid. I can't bear to have you hurt."

Again Sally, whose spirits were like thistledown, was happy, and she laughed.

"That sounds like father," she said. "He can't bear to have anybody hurt. I think," she concluded reflectively, "you are rather like him."

At that moment her horse was stepping over a fallen branch, and as she looked down at it she saw the branch as something symbolic. It was a boundary. The former things had passed away. She had begun to love Champ. Even in that first moment she had a certainty, cool as a clear spring wind "across a bank of violets," that he would never love her; but it did not break the globe of light that danced before them and led them on. At least, it was leading her on. And not to tragic suffering: she felt no shadow of that. Only she had become a new person, as we sometimes do in crossing boundaries. She was in a new country, subject to other rules, hidden delights and sacred silences.

"Do you know people?" he was beginning. "Round

here, I mean. Your mother's so busy—she's so much in town——"

There he paused, Sally understanding he found it difficult to account for her mother with civility.

"No," said she soberly. "I shall be busy, too."

"What are you going to do?" asked Champ.

He was too curious to wait. He knew the jaded life her mother led and wondered if the girl could possibly mean to press into the same rut of a pseudo-intellectualism.

"Make biscuits, I guess," said Sally, laughing, not at that but the joke on him, the hidden secret he could not possibly know. She had decided to fall in love with him. "Or Hollandaise sauce. We're in clover now. We've got that nice Elizabeth from the back road, but she's a teacher and nobody knows how long she can stay."

"I know her," said Champ. "I've seen her on the road. She looks like an Indian, except for that dusky bloom you hardly ever see. And the way she walks!"

Sally found her own satisfaction in Elizabeth obscured and her treasure of secret love heavy to lift. Could it be that she really had stirred hope into the philter the day was brewing for her? Wasn't it enough that she should love him without raising the least little barrier about them to enclose him with herself and let him wake to the realisation May depended on, that he was in the enchanted web and the tiny threads of nature and woman's subtle will had bound him there? No, it should not be. She would be his friend among the cool securities outside the web. But, she thought arrogantly, she would be his guardian, his unseen

other self, and she thought of two lines her father had taught her when she was little and delighted to hear her say in her silly lisp:

> "How oft do they their silver bowers leave
> And succor bring to us that succor want."

She was no angelic presence. She had come from Paris mentally jaded, but now she would wake up to a lovely task; she would be his secret guardian.

They kept on through the Calvert woods, turning cunningly conceived curves for vistas, and talking chiefly, to her surprise, about Sally herself. He seemed bent on knowing her. What made her homesick in Paris? Didn't she like it abroad? To that Sally soberly owned she was glad to come home.

"It's like pictures over there," she said. "We'd go on a long pilgrimage to see them if we couldn't see them any other way; but it isn't for us. If we stay too long, it changes us somehow. I don't know how, but it does."

"We shall be out of the woods in a minute," said Champ. "I'm hungry, hollow down to my boots. Stop. What's that?" It was a stir at the end of the road for which they were making, a car driven recklessly toward them. "Turn in here," said he. He was frowning. "It's closed to motors. They've no business——"

They turned off and halted. Now there was the sound of voices from the car, a girl's shrill laugh and a man's unpractised yodel. They came on, breaking up the quiet of the woods, brutally as if in defiance. Sally looked again at Champ and saw he had deeper cause for anger than mere trespassing. Then, rounding one of the curves, the intruders came in sight and she

knew. Irene was driving, and beside her was the youth who was now calling "Echo! Echo!" and in the tonneau another pair who sang together a song of their own choosing without regard to him. Champ, his face black with anger, pushed his horse forward until Sally wondered foolishly if they would run him down. Irene, suddenly silent, put on her brakes and came to a stop. There was a cry of "Calvert! Calvert!" Irene did not join it. She looked at him as if she begged for mercy. He made them the barest salute.

"You'll have to back," said he, and, ignoring the others, speaking to Irene with a ceremonious coldness. "Further on the path is narrower, you know. It's not for motors. You saw the sign."

"O come, Champ," said Bobby Fletcher, the fresh-faced boy beside Irene. "We're not for backing out. Get your nag's nose out of the way."

Champ did not answer. He still looked at Irene, and she at him, at first defiantly then miserably, her eyes seeming to plead with him, and the car began to back, the other three apparently much disgusted. It was plainly a fight between the two principals. Champ sat motionless, not speaking until the car retreated round the curve and had time, he thought, to get into the highway again. Then he turned to Sally.

"We might go on," he said, with the tinge of haughtiness that is the sister of shame.

Irene was in some way his, Sally concluded, and he was furious at coming on her in a rackety crowd.

They got out into the road in time to see the car speeding along toward the Inn, and both had the same thought.

"I don't want to breakfast," said Sally. "Do you mind? Nothing will be as nice as the woods. Let's go back home."

"You've got to breakfast," said Champ. "I'm not going to have your day spoiled——"

"It isn't spoiled," said Sally. She had summoned back her gay good humor. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll have a gallop on the road and give my family time to get off on the early train. Then we'll go back to my house and Elizabeth and I'll get breakfast, and you shall see her walk round the kitchen and admire her dusky bloom. Come on."

She plunged into the woods again and he had to follow. This time she was on the lookout for the windings of the path, and an hour later, when they pulled up at Red House, Champ had recovered his temper and she had the situation in hand.

XVIII

CHAMP refused breakfast. He could not see himself sitting by while two girls assembled food for him, one a dusky wildness and one the "cool nymph from old forgotten fountains sprung," which was the first line of the sonnet he wrote after getting home, and which was shortly published in the literary journal where Templeton had for so long found his soul stumbling without goal or palliatives by the way.

"Rather good," said Templeton, when it came out, tossing it into Sally's lap. "The moderns proscribe nymphs, I believe, but it's a serviceable word."

Sally read, with no idea that she was the springing nymph. Indeed, she was a little touched by something like jealousy. Who was the nymph? Was there a second girl his eyes had rested on, one besides Irene? Had she to defend him from a crowd of them? There was nothing cool about the rackety Irene in her invading car, and Elizabeth, if he did brighten over her walk and her bloom, was anything but classical. She was pure country maid, straining to make the academic best of herself. Sally tried to ease their relation, hers with Elizabeth, into something approaching a girl's familiarity. This was really because Champ had been so struck by her, and whatever door he opened Sally now wanted to peer inside. But there was no thoroughfare. Elizabeth was dignified, in a

prim way, but not responsive, and Sally could not know she carried the weight of her mother's wildness proudly; she had to be proud, to counterbalance that sad unworthiness. Elizabeth's burden was lighter as well as heavier since Templeton had lifted it for that moment of friendly sympathy. She was ashamed before him, but she was also quieted by finding he saw the other side as plainly as hers. She had no sense of having betrayed her mother to him, because he seemed to be, in a sense, her mother's partisan. He understood how it might be, and though she, in her fierce virginity, did not understand, she could believe this was not because she was too virtuous but too ignorant. His tacit acceptance of the horror was incredible. It made the world doubly hateful to her; but her humility toward him was as great as her sorrow, and she believed he knew the human heart in ways dark to her.

The French reading had stopped. Pat, who was busy in his work-room, forgot all about it, and when Templeton one night reminded Elizabeth to stay, she shook her head at him dumbly. When she left the kitchen to go home, he followed her out, and walked along beside her. He spoke to her directly, believing that to be best.

"How are things going?"

She could not answer to any purpose.

"Not very well," she said, finally.

"Can you," he asked her, "think of anything to do?"

"No."

There was but one thing in her savage heart: the wish for death, death for the man because he was a scoundrel, death for her mother and herself.

"You know," said Templeton gravely, "sometimes women on a farm have a pretty tough life of it. They work too hard."

"Like a dog," said Elizabeth passionately. "She always worked like a dog."

"I don't believe she had any pleasure. Did she? Some women don't."

Elizabeth felt that suffering inner self of hers writhing, as if he were accusing her of all the hungry years.

"No," she said. "She had no pleasure." But she awoke under a spasm of self-defense. "What could I do?" she asked him, in a tortured voice. "I went away. I had to go or die myself. And now I've asked her to go away with me, and she won't do it."

"Ask her again," said Templeton. "Take her on a trip. I can find you the money. Keep her away all winter. Take her to the theatre. Let her hear music. Give her anything she wants." He forgot he was thinking aloud, and added to himself: "But what is it a woman like that wants?"

"Nothing," said Elizabeth bitterly. "Can you see her going to theatres—except with him—and a movie!" she added, from her rending jealousy.

"Because," said Templeton, "he wants her with him. Or he seems to. You don't, Elizabeth. Do you want her with you?"

"No," said Elizabeth, in an angry honesty. "I hate it all, the house when I go back and find her gone, and Enoch plodding round and not saying anything, but knowing about it. You say she wants to be happy. She wants something different. So do I. I want something different, too."

"Did you like it when you were away? When you were teaching school?"

He warned himself to be careful. She was a wild thing. She must not be frightened. Elizabeth was silent for a moment, while she thought. Had she been happy before terror walked into her life? It all came flooding back upon her, the meagre scene of her evenings while she taught the country academy, and her freedom in it, the company of her beloved books, the sizzling old-fashioned air-tight that warmed her room at the top of the house where she boarded with a cosy widow who did not interfere with her, the moments when she threw up the window for a breath of air and saw the stars in their splendor: it was all wonderful in comparison with the dark house her mother's absence had poisoned for her. And she was constrained to tell the truth to him. He was her savior and the governor of her dark mind.

"Yes," she said. "I had my books. If things were wrong at home I didn't know it. And when you are away from things, even if you think they're wrong it isn't the same. And," she added passionately, in her manner of scourging herself, "I suppose I'm not right. I'm as much of a sinner as the ones I blame. I suppose I don't love her or I shouldn't want to get away from her. I do. I want to get away."

Templeton considered for a moment. He had no use for the arrogance of the higher moralist, nor could he tell her the plain truth that other people also wanted to get away. Didn't he want to get away? Didn't he long to tuck Sally under his arm and disappear from the accustomed haunts that plagued him

so? Why should this girl flagellate herself for not going against nature?

"Don't insist on defining things," he allowed himself to say, and even that smacked of the higher moralist. "Life doesn't run in straight lines. You say you don't love her. Well, love doesn't go on rubber tires. Act as if you did. It won't hurt you. Warm yourself up, child and let her feel it. You're too cold."

Was she cold? As she walked there with him, her mind was busy with the great "ifs" of the rebellious soul. "If I could be with you," her heart was crying, "everything would be easy. If I know I don't love her, it is because I know now what love could make me do. You could make me, you, my master, my friend." But she answered him with a certain blankness of acquiescence:

"I'll try. I'll do the best I can."

There seemed nothing more to be said, and they were coming to her door.

"Shall I wait," he asked her, "while you get a light?"

"No," she said, in her dull way. "There's one in the kitchen. Enoch will be at home."

She answered his good night and went in. Her mother was there, peering from the darkened window, and Elizabeth paused and watched her for a moment. Then Eunice turned, and said bitterly, as if the words were ready on her tongue:

"He come home with you, did he? How long has this been goin' on?"

They faced each other, two trembling women in the dark, neither seeing the other's face, but each with an unfamiliar courage of speech because there seemed to

be protection in being so obscured. Elizabeth did not answer. She was wondering whether the time had come for what Templeton had bidden her, and she must assume the love she did not feel. But Eunice burst forth again, in a tremulous intensity.

"I've seen you with him on the road, after dark. He's a married man." That sounded incredulous. He was a married man and Elizabeth knew it. Didn't she know it? the incredulous tone insisted, or didn't she know enough to remember how such things were talked about and where they led? "I've seen it goin' on," said Eunice, lashing herself into courage to face the daughter whose judgment she feared. "Over there at the house, when we're workin', you listen to hear him come in. When you know he's settled by the fire, you're as pleased as a child. That's why I go over there to work. Do you s'pose I'd spend my time runnin' back an' forth to earn a dollar an' a half a day if I didn't have to keep my eye on you?"

Still Elizabeth stood silent, but in that amazed moment there awoke in her a perception of the terrible irony of life which is known as humor. She had never been found to appreciate the lighter side of things, but at least she did see then, with a lightning clearness, the grim outlines of the grotesque ever present even in colossal tragedy. Here they were, two women set in the tie implying supreme love, each mortally jealous of the other's good name and moral cleanliness, and neither could move a step to make her own position clear or adequately influence the other. What, Elizabeth thought, could she say? What would Templeton have her say? To deny his influence, even to

recognize it, would drag him, with his wide kindliness and grave courtesy, into this tainted atmosphere. Was this the time for pressing her own case against her mother, and reminding her: "You understand then? This is how I feel about you?" But if it were the time, it could not be done, by her, at least. Still less could she pretend to the love that had never been in her angry heart and now was farther off than ever. To her greater amazement, her terror even, she herself ended that moment of dark suspense by breaking out into a wild high peal of laughter. She did not remember having laughed with abandon. She had a ready smile, but it recorded only a pleasurable response to the gentler incidents of life; it might be imagined now as frightened away forever by the rending passion of the moment. Eunice came a step nearer and spoke her name, remindingly, as if she were calling back the Elizabeth they both had lost. But she, too, was frightened. And in the midst of it came Enoch's voice from the doorway:

"Anything broke loose?"

Everything, Elizabeth wanted to tell him, out of her newly awakened understanding. Everything had broken loose, the hearts and minds of women chiefly, and he was not the one to fetter them again.

She brought herself back to a choking composure.

"I'll get a light," she said, and struck a match from the box on the table beside the lamp. As the wick flared and she set on the chimney, she caught a second glimpse of Enoch there in the doorway, his scanty hair "all over his head," as if he had rumpled it in his dismay. He was in shirt and trousers and carried his

shoes in his hand. Probably he had caught them up as he started for the stairs, feeling there was no time to put them on.

"There!" said Elizabeth. "I guess that'll burn."

Her motions seemed, he thought, to indicate that all that towse had been about the lamp. But he noticed also that her cheeks were wet.

"I thought suthin' must ha' broke loose," said he, in his flat voice, and after this brief attempt to establish relations with his kind, he turned about, seeming to withdraw into his deafness, and went upstairs. His womenfolks were giving him a great deal of trouble.

Elizabeth threw her mother a glance and wondered at her for being so quick in taking on her ordinarily evasive air. Now Eunice was running her finger along the mantel, with a housewifely absorption.

"I dusted here this mornin'," said she, not looking up. "Queer how the dust settles. I s'pose it's the ashes though." She turned about and went into her bedroom so softly that Elizabeth seemed to see her, a shadow, melting into the other shadows of the unlighted room.

Elizabeth stood there, one hand on the table, looking down at the gift books there, but without seeing them. She was stunned to a spiritual numbness. Her mother, incredibly, she who had been as remote from her own inner life as a stranger, had invaded it. The sacred fact of Templeton's kindness to her and her passionate response was like a plant that had seeded and flown abroad. She was no longer in that inner citadel of hers where she lived her moral life in a proud seclusion. All the windows and doors of it had been flung

open, and the condemnation of a world, though in her mother's voice alone, had swept in. She was broken by it. The earth had got hold of her and shaken her in its teeth. She was sick with the jar and misery of it. So she had felt when, a little girl, she had been told by another little girl, a curious, eager imp, how children came into the world. It had been horrible to her, a part of the unfriendliness and brutal power the earth seemed even then to have over its offspring, and she put her hands over her ears and ran shrieking: "I don't want to know!" and would never after, if she could help it, speak to Nanny Bell. She had not thought about men and women in the tremulously excited interest of the young. Life was, when she could make it so by escaping into her books and dreams of other times and ways, a bewildering pageant, and what wonder if she made it a more stately one than it could ever be?

And as she stood there amid the confused dispersal of her girlish dreams, suddenly she began to grow proud. She drew her dreams again to her bosom as if they were children a rough voice had frightened away. Were not noble things still noble, even if blind eyes did not see them and the deaf could not hear? She was not touched by her mother's anxiety over her. She was angry. Something had been defiled. And at that moment of anger, she heard a low tapping at the front door. So highly strung was her consciousness of every sound and its implication, that she knew who it was, took up the heavy lamp in both hands and carried it into the front entry, where she set it on a stand. It seemed to her she could not get the door

open quickly enough. There he stood, Jim Blaisdell, big, handsome, vital, a little sheepish with a conciliatory smile for her, when she took up the lamp again and held it high, to look at him. She towered majestic, and her pale face, with its sombre eyes, seemed not to question but furiously to condemn him.

"Good evenin'," he began awkwardly, all amort with admiration of her terrifying beauty. "I come round——"

Elizabeth held the lamp still higher and bent a little toward him. Her eyes seemed to make him a thing of naught.

"Go away," she said, in a low tone, not confidential but menacing. "Go! go!"

He too melted into the dark as her mother had done a moment earlier, but Elizabeth felt no triumph. She was sick with shame at overwhelming so poor a foe. She set down the lamp, shut the door and went back into the sitting-room. Immediately her mother appeared before her, a gaunt pathetic figure in her coarse plain nightgown, and still with a kind of beauty, Elizabeth saw with surprise, as she stood staring at her, judging her as she had judged the man at the door. For Eunice's black braids of hair, her wide frightened eyes, her tremulous mouth, gave her a pathetic look of tragic youth.

"Who was it?" she asked, her lips barely articulating the words, and Elizabeth saw she knew.

"Nobody," said she harshly. "Go to bed."

She set down the lamp, and, when she turned, her mother had gone.

XIX

Champ had been withdrawing from his father's company for hours of work, and the elder Calvert would have been surprised to know the time was not eaten up by a tangible Old London, but spasmodic scribbling at fever heat, recurrent staring at the lines with the frown poets accord their children when they come unwillingly, and other periods of lying flat on the leather couch, looking up at the ceiling and wondering how the deuce the old ones, who had become the great ones, detached themselves from earth sufficiently to get the breath of a mystical removedness into their verse: the true twilight feeling. Champ had a belief that there was not much use in thinking out these things. Poetry was a divine madness, a wind that blows, or it is not poetry. Some days he would not look at all at what he had written, because he dared not. Again, when he did look, a part of it at least wore that air of unfamiliarity which surprises the mind into ingenuous comment. "How could I do anything so good?" This was not often. He was feeling his way in the enchanted forest, cautious foot behind cautious foot, and again a run where the path was clear for a space, and sometimes a leap of mastery and, after that, odors of bracken and moss. He knew what his father was doing while he beguiled himself on his way through the forest and up the mountain of

delight. He was sitting in his library, a room that was never home to him because it was too subdued and bare, his lonely soul creaking like a spiritual Tithonus: "I am old. I am old." There was no way to make him feel he was not old. Champ knew what it was: not the years, but the everlasting absence of the woman they both loved. Usually Champ could beguile Stephen out of this land of memory by some of his fictitious plans, like the rebuilding of London, which was ever in the background, but just now he felt at last in the mood for his little novels in verse and was determined that nothing should draw him away from them.

He had worked eight days, and suddenly the stream ran dry. His head seemed empty, his eyes were hot and the lids ached. He knew what he had come to: the wall over which the creative mind can neither vault nor climb. It can only go round another way, either to "sweetest pillow, smoothest bed," or into the air and sun. But this was ten o'clock of an Indian summer morning, and he ran downstairs, went out by a back door where he was not likely to see his father sitting in his Tithonus loneliness, and across the road to the path into the woods. Once there, in the warm seclusion which was still half red and gold, he laughed out and loved it all. This was the ineffably precious, the lovely beyond words. What were words compared with bare branches and this ripened smell? His legs, too, were delighted. They were tired of curling up under a writing table, they remarked to him, twitching with discontent. They would now serve notice upon him that they meant to walk miles and miles. But it

was not a half mile before he came upon her at the side of the path, a sunny spot dappled by oak leaf shadows, a lady in green. Of course he knew her at once in spite of her fantastic dress; but she so fitted the scene, so blended into it with her green leggings and kirtle, that she did move him to amazement in that she could have become a thing so exquisite. He trembled with pleasure at her lines and attitude and at foreseeing the vulgar scrap he should presently have with her, if she had changed only her dress but not her heart and mind. He found he was laughing unsteadily.

"Irene," said he, "do you know what you look like?"

She raised her head, shaking back her short bright hair. Her eyes were narrowed. He had never seen them like that and wondered who had told her the trick, or if she had seen it commended in a book.

"No," said she. "What?"

"A long green worm," said Champ, and being a healthy-minded youth in spite of his poetry and the verse-makers who told him there was nothing you couldn't say or think, provided it made an image, wondered why the mischief she didn't open her eyes like a human being and look straight at him. And being tired, he found himself saying fractiously:

"Don't do that!" and again burst into laughter, realising how cantankerous he was. The laugh offended her and she opened her eyes wide enough, she hoped, to please him.

"I wonder," she said, "why you're always making fun of me."

"I'm not," said Champ. "Only you look so nice—

you're a peach in those green togs—but when you squinnied up your eyes you made me laugh, that's all."

What lady, even if she had an intention of looking like a Belle Dame sans Merci could take this with composure? What if the Knight at Arms, "alone and palely loitering," had had a brutal humor and invited the Belle Dame to stop making eyes at him? This occurred to Champ, and he sobered as the answer also came. The Belle Dame, whatever evil dwelt within her, was indeed beautiful exceedingly, and this little girl assuming a too passionate rôle was, in spite of her slim green legs and slender length, half caricature. Therefore he was not afraid of her. He was meant to be. He was meant to find her so alluring that all the answering pangs of love would bring him to her. His laugh had blown away the cloudiness of his brain, and he threw himself on his back, hands under his head, and looked up into the enchanting patterns of blue cut by the branches over him.

"Do this," he said. "Roll over on your back and see how it looks up topside."

He did not trouble himself to see if she were doing it, and, indeed, was in danger of forgetting all about her. If Irene had but known it, he was nearer companionship with her than for a long time, pleasantly conscious that here was a human creature he needn't trouble himself about, enjoying what he was, thinking the same things. Something began beating in his brain, a shy rhythm that had run away from him like Daphne from Apollo. Ignore the Muse, and lo! she comes.

"By Jove!" he muttered, and sat up. It was his wondering salute to the rhythm; but Irene could only think it his response to her. For she had rolled over on her face and her tense body shook with disordered breaths. Champ looked at her and the rhythm fled. He could have smacked her, torn the green suit and its wearer to rags, and tossed them into oblivion. But he knew when he was beaten. The rhythm had gone and there was no use halloing after it. He could, however, settle with the girl.

"What are you doing there?" he enquired savagely. "Laughing or crying? what?" But he knew laughter would not have been the death of the rhythm. He could have said, "Wait a jiff till I put this down and I'll laugh with you." No, those were sobs that shook the grass-green tunic. A crying woman! "Will you tell me," said he, "what you're going on like that for?"

Irene reached for a handkerchief, made a show of drying her tears—carefully, he noted, there being a foreign medium between them and her cheeks—and sat up. The small face was undeniably convulsed. "Poor little devil!" he thought, with that angry compunction he so often felt toward her when she was childlike and fond.

"You talk to me," said she, "like a husband."

His dogged kindliness evaporated. But there was nothing to say, she being woman and he bound to the difficult code of courtesy at any price. Not often did he find himself able to observe it toward her, but to-day perhaps the green kirtle did put him in a more knightly mind. There was no doubt of what he wanted to say. It was something like this:

"Don't think it. I'm not a husband to any living woman nor do I propose being."

But that hardly seemed possible to say to a little green oread who did cry actual tears and didn't shirk being disfigured by them, though she had used her handkerchief so expertly. She was looking at him openly, as if the tears had not seriously damaged her, and Champ felt, with a pang of pity, that somehow, foolish as she showed herself, distasteful as she must be to any man of sense, there was a horrid reality in it all. She was mad with the madness called love. He was ashamed of her for feeling it, ashamed of himself for seeing and rejecting it. "Two fools together," he thought, and said: "Come along, Irene. Stay to lunch with father and me and I'll take you home."

She shook her head.

"No," she said. "My car is at the other end. I always leave it there."

"Always leave it? what do you mean? Have you been coming here?"

She nodded.

"Every day, for a week."

"What for?"

"I hoped you'd come," she said sadly. "I've been willing you to. With all my might. And now you've come. There's something psychic about it."

She was looking at him like a child, with sad, ingenuous eyes. Yet she was not a child, he reminded himself. She was a girl of a limited intelligence who had learned the catchwords of the knowing and was playing them off on him.

"Irene," said he, sounding, he hoped, like a prig of

any color, "if you want to see me, why don't you write or 'phone me? Don't come wriggling into the woods and try voodoo on me. It's funny."

This, although meant to rouse her, made no dent in her sad consciousness. She simply moved nearer, lay down again and put her head on his knee.

"Champ," said she, "I'm so lonesome."

He looked down at the bright hair under the dappling shadows and wondered whether he could allow himself to laugh or whether presently he should swear. For it was hideously funny and also, shot through his knowledge of the farce she was playing, there was a bright thread of sorrow for her. She was a little fool, but she idealised him up to her fool's capacity, and she was suffering. And presently he found he was stroking the bright hair and finding the wavy richness a living beauty under his hand. It threw him into a trance-like pleasure, the hair that understood him better than Irene herself, the stillness of the woods, the peace of them now she had hidden from him the reproachful misery of her face. Was this wood magic? was it some sort of hypnotism the knowing would be able to define? And as a deeper quiet seemed to fall between them and Irene to have withdrawn herself still further by reason of it, he began to wonder if she could be asleep. Yes, she was asleep. Her soft breathing was regular and so light she seemed hardly living under his hand. It made her infinitely pathetic to him, she looked so helpless in her ignorance which was not innocence, with the helplessness of a child.

At that moment, he was happy with the exquisite happiness of an old dream of his, the finding himself in

a strange land with a strange love he had never been able to see clearly, but who went where he went, her shy soul demanding nothing of his soul, and "beautiful exceedingly." His hand ceased to move on the bright hair and rested on it lightly, afraid to leave it lest a movement should break the spell. He was withdrawn into a far region, and presently the lost rhythm came beating back, as a bird once startled may return. He sat there memorising it in his delighted mind, and suddenly heard a step. Curiously, for he had not thought of Sally for days, and then only with a frank interest devoid of curiosity, his mind, like a guard set at the enchanted gate, cried out her name. He turned his head in the direction of the sound. The world came back, the ironic world, and he again thought: "Two fools!" He touched Irene's shoulder, but she did not stir, and from his impatient understanding of her, he knew she did not want to stir. She was willing to be seen. The steps came on and a figure rounded the curve in the path. It was not Sally. It was Templeton, who now turned off into the thick woods, treading on dead branches as if, Champ thought irritably, he was making all the noise he could, to announce scrupulously: "I didn't see you. Understand, you are entirely alone."

"Wake up," said Champ, grasping Irene's shoulder. "Wake up."

She did wake, of necessity, the grip was so mandatory, moved her face a little and looked up at him. The eyes betrayed her. They were full of a clear, noonday light, and in spite of themselves they asked: "Do you

love me now?" He saw, and knew where she had been while he drifted off with what he called her soul in that brief sojourn in the land of magic. She had been awake and hidden, like a predatory feline, to lull the watchfulness of its prey.

"Come," said he roughly. "We look like two fools. Get up."

She did sit up and patted her hair into place. At least they were one in this: she, too, knew they had never been so near. If she had by chance found the way to the denied places of his confidence, she could find it again. If now he was angry with her, he was at least not bored.

"Didn't you hear?" he adjured her. "Somebody was coming. If you're willing to look like 'Arry and 'Arriet on a bank 'oliday I'm not, that's all. Trot along and have luncheon."

Food was the only social medium he could think of to prove his reluctant good-will. Flatter her he could not, kiss or console her he would not, but he might at least offer her a semblance of social intercourse. Now he was fronted by another Irene, perhaps the only true one. She came out from the mists of her subterfuge. She was angry.

"I know," said she. "You are afraid. You expect her. You meet her here."

He was honestly perplexed. The first vision that presented itself to his mind was that of Elizabeth, merely because she was the most alluring creature he had seen in a long time. He flushed a little, feeling guilty: for after all, handsome as she was, there was

something humorous in imagining him at a rendezvous with a remote Elizabeth whom he connected chiefly with Greek friezes.

"Good Lord!" said he. "Who?"

She looked him in the face, from no amorously narrowed eyes, but with hostility. There was conscious virtue in her gaze, the virtue of the wife on the threshold of a righteous jealousy.

"The Templeton girl," said she. "I suppose her name is Sarah. You call her Sally, don't you?"

His face grew hot.

"Her name," said he stiffly, "happens to be Sabrina."

"Oh," said Irene. She sprang to her feet. "Speak of angels! There she is, Sabrina!"

She had contrived, in her anger, to put dramatic stress upon the name. What the emphasis meant he could not tell, whether it was satirical indicating that Sabrina was of no importance, or whether it was merely anger, and in the second he looked at her she was up and away, speeding along the path. Turning, he found Sally advancing the way Templeton had come. Sally was sauntering on in a leisurely fashion, not so ready to notice him as peering after the vanishing Irene. It all moved so like a too-conventional drama, with characters entering and slipping off at the right moment, that Champ found himself good-natured again and highly amused. Sally suited the woods; she was nymph-like in her white dress, and if he had been a spoiled young man he might have thrilled over seeing two maidens of such obvious attractions entering and exiting while he seemed to hold the centre of the stage. But when she came up, he was laughing.

"What a nice boy," said Sally, it is to be hoped innocently, her eyes still on Irene. "I don't know that it is a boy. Perhaps it's a little tree come to life. Isn't that a lovely shade of green?"

"Lovely," said Champ. "No, it isn't a boy." At that moment the fleeing figure was lost in a curve, as if it vanished utterly and if you hurried round the curve yourself you'd never find it. "There! you see," said Champ, his gaze following hers. "It was magic. It grew up while you looked at it and now it's gone. I told it your name's Sabrina. It is, isn't it?"

"How did you know?" asked Sally.

"Your father told my father and he told me."

They both looked a little queer, remembering their first meeting and Calvert's eager acceptance of her.

"It's a kind of a secret between father and me," said Sally. "I've got a middle name too, he gave me, only nobody knows it but us."

"I know it," said Champ, with an inspiration. "Is it F?"

"How did you know?" cried Sally.

She was not pleased with him, and certainly not with herself for giving him the clue.

"Pooh!" said Champ. "That's nothing," and declaimed:

> "Sabrina fair,
> Listen where thou art sitting—

oh, how does the thing go? Miss Sabrina Fair Templeton! That's what you are."

"Well, for mercy's sake," said Sally, much discontented, "if you're so clever as all that, don't tell." She even felt it wise to lure him away from the topic lest

she also betray that her mother, when Sally was a little girl, had asked Templeton: "Do you really want her to be called Sabrina Fair? You haven't any Fairs on your side and I certainly haven't on mine." Mother was an encyclopædia of modern dates and names, but when it came to uncouth nonsense she was apt to fail you, and Sally had not been much more than little when she learned to abet her father in keeping mother's lapses an affectionate secret. So Templeton told his wife he would give up the Fair, but he and Sally kept it for their intimate moments.

"I'm trailing father," said Sally. "He was seen turning in here. Has he gone by this way?"

"No," said Champ promptly.

He wished he had not seen Templeton, and that Templeton had not seen him in the tableau he remembered now with a renewed anger against the little feline who had betrayed him to it.

XX

Templeton had not known for many years a winter of such equable domestic weather. The days were all alike. He went off in the morning with a mind free from desperate attempts to fit the domestic puzzle to a pattern and returned to dinners suited to civilised man. The delicatessen shops and rotisseries knew him no more. Elizabeth ordered supplies and Sally, with a painful attention to the detail that interested her no more than it did her mother, often went to town and, on Elizabeth's advice, brought back raw material unknown in the village. Sally had, with a seeming carelessness of purpose, set herself to learn housekeeping, and Elizabeth, wishing her out of the kitchen, was conscientiously supporting her in it. Both girls were bent on taking the burden from Templeton's shoulders; but they could only do it in a tacit agreement, not from any sympathetic unison. Templeton did occasionally wonder why the domestic sky had so miraculously cleared. Usually he ascribed it to Elizabeth, but sometimes he wondered if Pat were responsible for a good deal of the fine weather. Pat was a wonderfully sympathetic companion. He talked gravely with Amy about plans for the next year, was jocose with Sally, as to a charming child who found herself caught in the hurly-burly of modern life and had got to be delightfully homesick in it until she

took refuge in middle age, and treated Elizabeth with that tactful measure of respect due to "help," the anachronism she was. "Don't forget," his quiet gravity whispered to her, "that you can construe your Latin better than I can and that, in this hour of feminist triumph, you may be destined to offices I could never fill. Hail to you, Minerva!" And though this was unsaid, Minerva felt it and was confirmed in the dignity of her task.

But to Templeton, he brought a sensitive understanding beyond anything his brother remembered in him. Templeton began to suspect that he had himself lived for many years in an alien atmosphere. Not only was Amy absent-mindedly roaming the world of events, with no deeper design than that of collating evidence about the disturbances of the earth's surface, but the men he worked with were forever tossing about the word "modernism" as if there were magic in it. Templeton was always sorry for the middle-aged trying to keep up with the clamoring procession. He saw them sweating along, tongues lolling, and wondered if they felt as he did, the despair of the out-classed. Yet he was, after all, not quite one of them. He never troubled himself to learn the new catchwords, and he had no illusions about his fitness for his job in that arena of publicity and haste. He was simply retained because his name was a panacea to readers of his own age, who felt there couldn't be a too profane iconoclasm in a paper that stood for J. T., the signature of his column. He was not the leaven of the brew, and certainly not the spice; but he knew enough about kitchen lore to see himself as the extra handful of

flour stirred in at the close. It might make the loaf heavier, but it did contribute a certain trustworthy solidity. Still he was Dear Old Templeton, even to these eager young charioteers. They probably said he had an inoffensive way of putting his antiquated dope, but the poor old chap had got to have a living, hadn't he? In short, he was Dear Old Templeton. That covered it. But Pat, it almost seemed, knew him as he was. Pat was aware of his failure to worship things as they had been to the exclusion of what might be. If the younger generation was more honest than the old, Jack was glad to see them striding ahead, though he saw no accompanying reason for flouting what still seemed to him the decency of common life. And he did undoubtedly find a menace to literature in standardization: the academic formulæ whereby one man could learn to write as well as another. And he did dearly love the written word.

"Pat," he said, one night when a February thaw was chilling the air and they sat by the fire in one of their discursive talks, "poetry, you know. There's more and more of it printed, but aren't we deaf to it? Deaf to music. Insensitive. This stuff they're doing is like some barbaric scale with new intervals. The intervals may be all right, but we aren't used to them, and when we've muddled with 'em long enough we may not want to hear anything else. That's our nemesis."

Pat never sat in a chair like an ordinary man, not, for instance, as a stockbroker sits. Sally told him once he sat like a minor poet, and that it went with his soft neckties and bandit hats. He had even been known,

when he was younger, to throw himself on the hearth-rug at the feet of ladies who could advance literature and himself. Now he was in a low chair, embracing his knees.

"I don't mind about everybody's writing poetry," said he. "In point of fact, you know, that's how it's always been in a great revival. Look at the Elizabethans. Look at the seventeenth century, anyway. Great output, and a little of it lived. The rest never lasted beyond the Chloes and Nerissas it was hung on. Trouble is, Jack, you're sort of muscle-bound. You can't get into step. Why don't you march with the times?"

Yet he said it so affectionately that it seemed as if he loved his brother the more for not marching.

"No use," said Templeton, shaking his head. "I'm too old. You're too old, too, Pat," he added, with a sudden admiring recognition of his brother's limberness. "You ought to be. Only, you've no convictions. It's like the women's fashions in hats. Some years, it's criminal, I understand, to have a bunch of flowers pinned on in front. They've got to be behind. So you go and stick yours on behind, too."

"It's a business," said Pat, imperturbably, "life is. It's a game. I happen to have learned it and you haven't. I think it's rather clever, myself, to be a crack player. And after all, it's a poor fiddler that can't jazz just because he's been taught something else. Not," said he generously, "but what I'd like a hack at the other thing, too. I don't see anything picturesque in the age. I certainly can't see anything beautiful, though I don't somehow find myself gassing about

beauty as if it was a remedy in a bottle, the way you and the poets do, and maybe that's why I like to get you started about your imaginary kingdom. I do like that, old man."

"Do you?" said Templeton, much moved. It was wonderful to him that even this journalistic Autolycus, who took the market as he found it and lived on snapping up the unconsidered trifles of its varying fashions, should yet be impressed by the most unworldly world he could himself create. "You know to me—to me, Pat," he was ashamed of his quick emotion, "it's a kind of refuge to think of it. As a church is a refuge, you know, to the churchy people, and a heaven you can put your hand on to the unimaginative that have to have pearly gates. But I didn't expect you to stand for it."

"I don't blame you," said Pat tolerantly. "You know me. You know I'm well enough off in the world as it is, if I can buy and sell in it. But Lord, Jack! I may have my dreams, like any other man. Or rather, if I haven't any, I may go dotty over yours. And really, that's exactly what I've done. There are two or three questions I want to ask you, if you don't mind."

"Fire away," said Templeton, completely at ease. "Anything you like."

So Pat fired away.

"I wanted to know," he said, "whether you meant to make it an actual kingdom or an actual polity like Plato—the Republic. Anything socialistic? Wouldn't it have to be, to draw an audience?"

Templeton stirred uneasily in his chair. He hadn't

thought about the audience. It had been one of his prime beliefs that the man who bowed the knee to the reader was lost. A play, yes: there you have to work with one eye on your audience, for if it doesn't know what you're at, you might as well shut up shop. But in that wide liberty which is fiction, he wanted every man to write what was in him without glancing up to count the eyes ready to read or the ears to hear. Pat, who was watching his every movement with the keenness of the hunter on some sort of game —and what game is more elusive than these tests of the mind of man?—saw he had reduced the pretty play of fancy too rashly to fact.

"Don't squirm, old man," he said affectionately. "I don't mean a Wells geographic chart or a Looking Backward. Only I wondered if the whole thing was going to be a kingdom in the clouds. Whether you're going to take 'em up into the blue and leave 'em there."

To Templeton, who was a reasonable soul with few temperamental flaws in his composition, this did not seem alarming. He looked into the fire and, forgetting Pat, who was wise enough to efface himself, considered. He began speaking in that dream-like way Pat seemed able to induce in him.

"My point is, my starting point, that we're all unhappy, unless we're so young and full of sheer physical health and go that we could accept any kind of a world and get away with it. We are unhappy, Pat, the best of us—and know it. And the worst of us are unhappy and don't know it, just as a fellow that never takes a bath has a crawly skin and doesn't

know it. He hasn't any standards. He thinks all skins are crawly. Well, now I have a kind of idea that when we began to learn so much about the wonders of the universe, it shouldn't have taken us farther away from beauty and tranquillity and all the things that make life worth while. When we invented motors, we should have looked on them as something to translate life into wonder, not stinking djinns that enable us to 'go some place,' without seeing what we pass on the way. And I'd have everything that's invented referred to the highest intelligence we've got to show us how to use it, and not turned over to demos, to make louder smash-bangs and nastier smells. And I'd have processions of dances——"

"Pageants," said Pat quietly. "We have pageants."

"Yes, but not every day. I'd have dancing every day."

"Fox trots?" said Pat, as if he were checking him up, restraining him, if only by a question, to make sure he would go on as he really wished to go.

"No, no," said Templeton, frowning. "None of your hideous trots, but dancing. There should be rhythm in it, the rhythm of actual music, not the sort you have to hunt for and can't find."

"Will there be—love in it?" asked Pat.

"Yes, there'll be love." Templeton seemed to be looking so far away that Pat felt he could watch him unobserved. "You see, the Pilgrim, when he leaves this world as it is and rushes off to bury himself in solitude—why, he not only comes on the country we've been imagining, but he comes on the woman. Oh, yes, there's love. The woman had been waiting for him."

"What do they do?" asked Pat.

"They live there, that's all."

Pat was a dexterous inquisitor. He did not need to ask many questions, but what there were seemed, like gentle guiding touches, to turn Templeton the way his mind loved to go. As it had been before, he forgot Pat and gave his fancy rein. It took him into tranquil paths and cities he had never seen. Images rushed upon him as they do upon minds fitted by nature to think in poetry, and he had a very happy time of it. But when the flood of vision was no longer in spate, Pat felt his moment had come. He had been waiting for it a long time. Jack should reduce his vision to terms of print and the common mind.

"You know, old man," he said, "that's all very well as you talk it, but you'll have to tie your knots tighter if it's going to be written down. You don't want a rhapsody. Nobody'd read it. You want a scenario."

Templeton laughed a little.

"Well," said he, "maybe you're right. It's come to me in various forms, and the one I like best is this, because it has some humor in it. Really, it's a play. The Pilgrim isn't alone in his discontent. He knows a little colony of men like himself, and they run away and found their own community. They've suffered enough from science, and they scrap the jade and all her works. They've no use for motors, because the motor undermines the human spirit. They walk on their two feet. Any place that isn't within walking distance isn't anywhere. It doesn't exist. So with radio and electric lights and the whole bally business. They scrap it and simply begin over. They raise their

food, they weave their cloth, they go to bed at dark because they're too tired to sit up. In short, they're healthy animals."

"But what comes of it," Pat persisted. "You've only gone back to the childhood of man."

Templeton began to laugh softly to himself.

"I see the end," said he. "Life doesn't stand still. It's perpetually uneasy. If the curve mounts, it sags again. They're very happy, the Pilgrim and his friends. They don't miss their luxuries. It's a warm country, you see. But by and by somebody grows old, or he wants to do experimenting, and he votes to have electricity brought in. And curiously enough everybody else finds a reason for it. Somebody's child is deformed and the mother wants surgery for it, and one by one they get back the old sophistication until, after infinite pains, they're just where they started. It's a play, Pat. Don't you see? Four acts: Discontent and the exodus—the founding of the community —discontent again, the other side of the shield—Act Four, the return. Not The Admirable Crichton, mind you. And not moonshine and drivel, the way I talk about it. Distinct characterization, terms of common life."

"Yes," said Pat thoughtfully. "I see."

He got up and went quietly off to bed, and Templeton mended the fire and sat down before it, to go on dreaming, as if he and the glow of it were alone in the world. Very late, Sally came down. She was in kimono and nightie, and her braids of hair made her into a girl of fifteen. She got a stool and put it by him, and Templeton roused himself and was glad

to see her. She sat down on the stool and laid an arm over his knee.

"I've been down three times to look at you," said she, "but you were talking. How does Pat get you going so? He's picking your brains, darling. Aren't you on to that?"

Templeton laughed.

"Pat's got more brains than I have," he said. "His are competent advisers. They tell him the way to go. Mine are——"

He stopped and looked whimsically down on her. Sally shook her head, but she did not feel herself answered. She was not clever enough to know what Pat was up to, with his beguiling queernesses, but she was ready to believe he was up to something. Not anything dangerous, of course: he was kindness itself, though it was just a scream to look on him as an uncle. He was Puck, he was Autolycus. No uncle about him, unless Autolycus and Puck had a family tree. But to-night he wasn't important, even if he had seemed to be picking Templeton's brains. She had news.

"Did you know," said she, "mother wants you to go abroad?"

Templeton was startled out of his lethargy. He remembered his talk with Amy the night Sally came home. He remembered how neatly he had lied to beguile Amy into making the proposition it would have been futile to make to her. And with the coming of Sally, he had virtually abandoned his excellent system of deception. Somehow Sally seemed so crystalline, so sacred a little creature.

"We spoke of it," he said lamely. "Just before you came home."

"She said so. She's been thinking it over ever since. She thought if you went to some place off the beaten track—Spain, the Far East—you might get acquainted with the common people and do some fiction. She says your dialect stories would be a preparation. You'd only have to do the same kind of work and give it another environment. Father, could you? Is that what you'd like to do?"

She was looking up at him now, the young face, not too care-free to imply it wasn't the index of a good deal of thought, shadowed by the troubled earnestness of her desire to understand him. He must go warily, he told himself. There must be no pledging himself to an impossible task in order to get away and do the trick that, in anticipation, brightened every day before him. He temporised.

"I certainly should like," he said, "strange countries for to see."

"And it's been so long," said Sally. "You haven't been abroad since—" She looked up at him for prompting.

"Not since I was twenty."

He was glad to see her veering into safer channels. But a sharp anxiety leaped to his lips.

"What about you, Sally? I couldn't leave you here." He couldn't, his mind relentlessly told him, leave the girl with the chance of finding her tied to some grotesque slavery when he came back. She laughed and he frowned, looking at her more closely. For the laugh was cynical.

"I know what you're afraid of," said Sally, facing him from her lower level as if she knew they had to have it out now or Europe would be a dead issue. "Mother's right-about-faced. She doesn't expect me to lecture or write a book. There's just one thing she does want of me. She wants me to marry Champ Calvert."

Templeton, saying nothing, still looked at her. He did not find the fact surprising, but he wondered what lay behind her way of taking it. Sally began to blush, and the blush deepened until her face was darkly eloquent.

"You know," she said, "we've seen a good deal of them lately. Mother's had lots of talks with old Mr. Calvert. She knows he likes me. He thinks I'm old-fashioned, and that's the biggest reason of all."

"Does Champ like you to be old-fashioned?" Templeton asked abruptly, and she answered:

"Oh, yes. And so mother's not in the least likely to ask me to do anything but stay at home and be that kind. And it's what I really like myself, you know. I wouldn't be your Pallas Athene of an Elizabeth for anything."

There it was again, her half-laughing bitterness over the other girl. Templeton speculated a little. It sounded like jealousy, but that was out of the question. Sally, it was apparent, was as keen to it as he, and at once ashamed.

"Anyway," said she, "I've been put up for sale. I'm not uncomfortable, so long as they keep me on the block. I can easily stay there while you're gone."

Templeton felt hurt to the soul at the indignity laid upon her and her knowledge of it. He could not

ask how she actually felt toward the purchasing Calverts. All he could do was to say:

"Sally, my darling! my darling!"

She got up and enveloped him in bare arms and kissed him as she used to when she was little, on the top of his head and his chin, her places, she said, where nobody else would think of kissing him.

"Don't cry, darling," said she. "It's all right really. For you see, I'm cleverer than all of them, even if I'm not domestic, like your old Elizabeth. And you're going abroad, ducky, and you'll carry your soul with you in your green bag and take it out and see how it looks when you're all by yourself somewhere. I'll bet you can see your face in it."

Templeton did not feel any present satisfaction in the clarity of his soul. Indeed, this was one of the times when he cared very little about it in comparison with his need of making Sally safe from hateful machinations. He had expected to constitute her homecoming a daily celebration by abandoning the casuistries that were his means of marital escape; but that night, without premeditation but as if the devil put it into his head, he called to Amy as she sat by the dressing table braiding her long hair, and he had just pulled on his bedside light:

"They're a queer old-fashioned couple, Stephen Calvert and young Champ."

"Queer?" said Amy, in a mild surprise. "No, I don't think so. He may be rather provincial, but not Champ."

"They're interested in Sally, at least," said Templeton wickedly. "I'm going to tell them about that old invisible playmate business of hers. They're such

back numbers I bet a hat they'd turn it down. I'm going to see."

Amy wheeled upon him, leaving a tress of shining hair unbound. Her slightly myopic eyes looked vague and mystical without their glasses.

"I beg of you, Jack!" She spoke in a tone of horrified reproof. "Do nothing of the sort. Anything of that kind! Why, it would be fatal."

"Just as you say," said Templeton sleepily. He snapped out his light again. "You look very handsome, old duck. I believe I won't say my prayers to-night."

"I didn't know you ever said them," said Amy practically, returning to her hair.

"Maybe I don't," said Templeton. "Anyway, I won't venture on 'em to-night. Hamlet's royal stepfather was a great old boy, wasn't he?"

"He was a murderer," said Amy, with truth.

Templeton was quoting him sonorously:

> "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
> Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

"Amy," he broke out, half an hour later, when she was dropping off, "do you feel you're a sinner?"

"In an evangelical sense?" enquired Amy sleepily.

"In any sense?"

"Why, no, I don't think I do."

"I do," said Templeton, with what seemed to her a surprising relish. "Golly! ain't I wicked!"

And he, too, slept, and dreamed of Sally walking in a garden and telling him he needn't worry. Mother wasn't really going to sell her to Champ.

XXI

It looked, at last, as if Templeton really were going, and he thought of it with a warm consciousness of the secret purpose he was carrying with him. He almost felt it bulging in the green bag. It was a secret from all but Pat, who had helped him so tremendously by keeping it alive in his mind. There was no one else, he realised, to whom he could possibly have told it. To confide his nursling to Amy would have been like consigning it to an ambitious stepmother who would instantly have set about thinking what could be done with it when it grew up. He would have been made to talk about it before clubs and classes unless he lied himself hoarse. Sally—he would have liked to say something more definite to Sally, but he was faint-hearted. She might have understood, so far as her youth would let her understand his impoverished and straining age; but she would be sure to get ecstatic over what it meant to him, and that he did not want. Now Pat was a workman of sorts, and even if he hadn't played a very dignified game in literature he at least knew what other men had done.

A kindly spring, not so capricious as the poets sing her, slipped along into March, and one hour of the floral clock had struck. Lilac time was almost here. He was to sail in June, and the journal knew he was going. It was so cordial about it that Templeton sus-

pected it of being glad. Was it a fortunate relief for it, a way of getting rid of him and finding no room for him when he came back? He rather expected it to ask him for letters from abroad: what England was doing and France. Not a word. His stock was low. And suddenly he found the spring rise, though not yet seething in Wall Street, had touched the literary market. His stock was soaring. March had seen a slight movement in what he grew to call "Templetons," but he had looked on it, knowing its source, as a little funny. The first he really knew about it was a letter from a persistent interviewer who had been doing Authors on Their Own Books. The interviewer was flattering, almost affectionate, though the Dear Old Templeton myth was not the one he stressed. He wanted Templeton to answer a series of questions which he took pleasure in enclosing. He was one of the thrifty persons who let the author take in his own washing, and he benignly specified that these questions were not the stereotyped ones sent to writers in general. They were issued as touching Templeton in particular, and apparently with the one idea of nailing him generically. Had he become a satirist deliberately and because human life presented itself to him from that angle? Had he exaggerated his types in order to get the appeal of a slight eccentricity of drawing? Or had he not exaggerated at all? Which of his books did he consider typical of his general purpose? Templeton read the questions through in delight, murmured, "What fools these mortals be!" and was about to drop the paper into the waste-basket when it occurred to him to take it home to Pat as illustrating

the grotesqueries of the publicity Pat lent himself to so shamelessly. In the library that night he pulled it out and began reading it aloud, looking up for ribald comment. Amy was the first to speak. She sat at the table frowning over some of her literary cat's-cradles and, when he had finished, she looked up, pen poised in air. Pat nodded appreciatively. But he, surprisingly, failed to laugh, and Amy said:

"You'd better answer that at once. Why not do it now we're all here together? Dictate to me. Take the questions seriatim. Number One, the list of your books?"

It was the most effectual shock of the multitude she had given him. He began to speak and stopped, his mouth open, feeling vacuous, and Sally, who had got up to leave the room in quest of a complete list she had, stopped and wondered why he looked so funny. But, she decided, in the inner circle of her mind where alone she allowed herself to see mother's acts without casuistry, that lady must have said something queerer than usual, to knock him out so completely. It was Pat who took command. He turned to his brother and spoke, if not persuasively yet with reason.

"Better do it, old man. Everybody does, if they're lucky enough to be asked. Especially now. You know about the tide in the affairs of men."

Amy, who liked to clinch things and to whom, if a half quotation was good a whole one was better, finished it for him with an intent so serious that it sounded like severity:

"Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

Templeton felt pushed into defending himself.

"But, good Lord!" he said. "I don't intend to answer it. In the first place it's drivel, whichever way you put it. It's a fool thing to countenance, and then the way the jackasses set it out! Satire! I never wrote a line of satire in my life. I don't see things that way."

"Oh, yes, dear, I'm sure you do," said Amy. "I'd never thought of it myself, but Pat's lecture simply showed me. I wondered I hadn't seen it before."

Templeton turned to his brother.

"You've been lecturing on satire?" he enquired.

Pat was ready for him.

"Why, yes, old man," said he, "in a way I have. That is, I've been lecturing on you. You probably didn't know it, but the Women's Fiction Club were in a hole when one of their speakers came down with flu and, owing to Amy's good offices, I was called in and asked to give an impromptu talk on anything I had ready. And I took you. Amy was a brick. She turned me loose among your books and I crammed over night, and it seemed to me the best angle to take 'em from was the one I did take. Realism, the realism that may be dull, may be grotesque, but shows up the modern man in the world he has built round himself. Satire!"

Templeton remembered the heroes of certain elder books as groaning in times of acute agony. He could have groaned, though it would no more have expressed him than a whisper. He could have bellowed, like the men of old, have lifted up his voice and made a great noise. The hopelessness of it was what affected

him. He couldn't explain with anything but an apparently mawkish humility that the books were, as Pat had so suavely characterised them, dull, but not by intention. They were honestly meant, they were intended to mirror the truth of things, and they were the best he could do. What he might have done if he had allowed himself in youth to take the foot-path way of glorious fancy which is called romance, only his grieved guardian angel could have told him. These journeyman blocks he had hewn out as nearly like life as he could; but they lacked atmosphere. There is a realism which is beautiful, but you attain it only by suggesting lights and shadows in a way that is portraiture, not photography. Always, he believed, you had to take the sky into account as well as the earth. Wasn't the sky the great reservoir of sun and rain and cyclones even? Had the earth any drama without it? His work was no more satire than it was a rhapsody. He didn't blame Amy. Pat had simply got up the gigantic hoax in the service of his god, publicity, and Amy, like the dear public, had been taken in. Nothing could have fitted her mode of thought more perfectly. She relied upon formulated fact. If you told her a man was an erotic poet, erotic he was, though he took to sermonising. Pat could have whispered her the moon was green cheese and she would have rejoiced. Science had at length confirmed an ancient myth. Cheeses! and in a lunar form. How intriguing! But Pat! Pat knew better. Templeton turned on him a wrathful gaze and found him gently sympathetic though imperturbable. Sally stood looking from one

to the other, a little flushed, pretty sure father had been mysteriously "done" and ready to pounce when she could find out where it would do the most good.

"It's not only," said Pat, "been a cinch for me but a perfect run of luck for you. You're going to be on velvet. For a while, that is. When I found how they lapped it up, I thought I'd try it on the Syracuse Club —I had a date there the next day—so I told 'em my brief case with the lecture announced had unfortunately been lost, and I should take the liberty of giving my new talk on John Templeton, the satirist. Jack, they loved it. And I've given the thing seven times in five weeks and it's put you where you never'd have been in a thousand years."

"A thousand years!" said Templeton bitterly. "You needn't have troubled yourself. I shall be pretty dead in a thousand years."

"Dear!" Amy rose and put her hand on his shoulder. The touch moved him. He was not used to these little unconsidered ways. It was not that she did not faithfully love him. She was always ready to love him, if he reminded her. "Dear," she said, "don't you know the public has to be taught what to think? Well, Pat's teaching it, that's all."

"No, he isn't," said Templeton, abjuring the hand on his shoulder. This was a fight needing all his resolution. "He's merely giving a lot of women what they consider a new idea to prattle over and incidentally put himself—and me—where we can command the market. Pat knows how to play the game and he's playing it."

Now Sally did an odd thing, for her. She took her

mother's hand from Templeton's shoulder and, with some energy, turned Amy about to her seat at the table.

"Father's thinking," she said, with a sort of hurt passion they had never seen in her. "Don't crowd him."

Amy sat down helplessly and looked over at Pat. Evidently, with Sally mysteriously hostile, her hope was in him. Pat gave her a consolatory glance and took up the case.

"Now, Jack," said he, "consider. You wrote eight books. What did you mean by 'em?"

"Mean?" said Templeton. "I meant to do something as near like life as I could. I took the people and the scenes I knew best. Small town life, that was what I knew. I'd an idea there was great virtue in realism. I didn't know then that the realist has got to be more than man, not less. I thought he could photograph his people and his locality and he'd be doing something of value when American literature came to be classified and mapped out by sections: some of 'em for New England, some of 'em for the west. I did the best work I could. I took people as I found 'em, and I didn't put any romance into 'em because there wasn't any there and it would simply have been painting a hippopotamus like a zebra. But I didn't get anything else into them—oh, that other thing that makes you laugh and cry and find there's something in humanity after all, even if it only walks on two sticks. And the books were dull, as you say, damned dull; but women bought 'em because I was connected with the academy, and they thought they

were getting what they called culture, and their husbands told 'em I was a good sort."

Pat put one leg over the other and stroked his ankle.

"Precisely," said he. "You took the man in the street they could all recognise, and you skinned him and hung him up in the open market and said, in effect: 'Now see if he doesn't look natural as life.' And they said, after they'd bought a few hundred copies, 'Why, yes, but we meet these critters every day. We hear just this talk. And, like Mr. Strachey's Queen at her dinner table, "We are not amused."' And what's the answer to 'em?"

"The answer," said Templeton, "is that I'm not amused either. I wasn't when I was committing the crime, and I'm not now. I tried to be a realist, God forgive me! And my principle of selection was so right and I made puppets so like the under-bred, half-baked dollar-chaser I've run away from since I had legs to run, that I run when I come on him in a book. And that, you say, is satire."

"Yes," said Pat. "So I've told the public, and so the public believes. I'll bet you any odds your books have begun to be enquired for in the shops, and clerks are rattling round step-ladders and clawing into the back of dusty shelves, and publishers are saying: 'Let me see, did we scrap those plates?'"

But Templeton had begun to get back his composure. It couldn't be so bad as that, he thought. A part of it was Pat's exaggeration and part his own rabidness about the market-place. Let it alone and it would die down. No doubt Pat had made a flurry of some sort among earnest ladies, but they forgot as

easily as they learned. To-morrow the crest of his wave would be past, and another would be rising, bearing some newer name to fortune. He smiled at Sally reassuringly. She was evidently perplexed and, since it concerned him, taking it hard.

"Never mind, Sabrina," said he, putting out his hand to draw her nearer. "You haven't got a famous father yet, and if you're a good girl you never will have."

He tossed the questionnaire into the basket and got up to leave the room, taking Sally with him. They would have a run, he thought. She wouldn't question him and, if she did, he needn't answer. Satirist! he was rather like a broken-winded old dog who asked nothing now but to bay the moon of beauty, not a chronicler of this bleakly foolish day. And when he was gone Amy took the questionnaire out of the basket and she and Pat adequately answered it.

XXII

It was amazing, the way the Templeton wave climbed and broke its crest, roaring, and retreated to climb again. For the bewildered victim of it could never help thinking of it as a wave. All day he heard the noise of it in his ears when the fellows at the office chaffed him and when he opened his mail and found letters respectfully asking for an article on the world's greatest satires and his intention in his own books, and which of them he preferred as conveying his meaning most precisely. He could have borne the office chaff if he had been sure the fellows were as tickled as he was with the disgrace of being made the object of so colossal a joke. They might have roared over it together: the exquisite humor of a man who had done mediocre work saddled with a reputation for having made it so subtly clever that the trained mind needed a quarter century to take it in. But he suspected them as wriggling under the uneasy sense of not having been acute enough themselves. To them he must still be Old Templeton who did a fair quality of academic drivel and appealed to the highbrow circles of small towns. But had they been mistaken? Ought they to have read into his work something they never suspected as being there? To be sure, it was understood that Pat Templeton, modern of the moderns, had started the rumor, and he, being Templeton's brother, it was only natural to suppose Templeton had

told him what he meant by the things. Curious if he hadn't. And Pat wouldn't, they averred, have risked his reputation on a wrong guess. He was absolutely in the know. He wasn't going to be laughed at, a fellow who called Kipling Old Top, and was hand in glove with Masefield. How did they know he called Kipling Old Top? Well, they couldn't say. Maybe Kipling called him so; but anyway Pat was in the know, and if he said anything was so, from a literary point of view, so it was. And there wasn't a rising litterateur who hadn't it in what he called his subconscious mind to remember that sometime Pat would be going back again and, if one went over, it would be a bit of all right to be introduced to literary London and perhaps acquire the distinction of calling Kipling Old Top oneself.

So they, in tacit agreement with women's clubs and colleges, piled their favors on Templeton until he was suffocated under them and even a little bruised, which, it will be recalled, had been the unhappy fate of Tarpeia of Rome. Only that lady is understood to have deserved what she got, and Templeton swore to himself he had by no means earned any such conclusive torture. His wife watched him anxiously and even pinned him down to confession. Was he getting returns from the wave Pat had so cleverly started? Yes, Templeton assured her, apparently unmoved, so many returns he was almost embarrassed by them. But was he sure he was making the best use of them? "Oh, quite!" he cheerfully answered, and, though she regarded him suspiciously, there was no more to be got out of him. As for Pat, he was impenetrable.

He sat in the room he called his turret chamber and wrote, hour upon hour, and when Templeton again introduced the topic of satire, cheerfully adjured him to forget it.

"If you're too huffy and stuffy to seize the chance and get what you can out of it," he said, "I tell you plainly I'm not. I've got six lectures booked for next fall: 'John Templeton, and Modern Satire.' Luckily you can't hurt me or yourself, however you deny it. I've covered the ground. I tell 'em you're the shyest author on record. You're not willing to accept any recognition that doesn't come unsolicited. You simply won't explain yourself. No good asking you. And I end with a couplet:

'With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart.

Implying you may have thrown away the key, but little Patrick found it."

College professors were meanwhile chewing over the questionnaire Amy and Pat had so painstakingly filled out. It was considered serviceably illuminating, and scores of pupils were going to be endued with it next year. Templeton never knew that. If he thought of the questionnaire at all, it was only to remember throwing it into the waste-basket. And indeed there was no reason for thinking of that especial one, except as being the first, because he had so many more. The leaves of the speech of men fell thick upon him and rotted under his feet.

In all the sloppy weather of this foolish time, Elizabeth brought upon him one of the unkindest gusts of

all. She had been told to use books from the Red House library, and often took them home. One night, Templeton, who kept up a desultory wonder over her domestic tragedy, went into the kitchen at her time for leaving, considering what he could ask her, if indeed he might ask her anything. There she was, standing, ready to go, with two books under her arm. She flushed at seeing him. Templeton had told himself she flushed easily and that he was glad to find it softened her to something approaching girlishness. But he did not know it was only for him her blood was moved.

"Got some books?" he began, and then gave a little hoot of derision, either of her lack of sense or at the quagmire of popularity where he found himself. "What do you think you're going to do with those?" he asked. "Mine, aren't they? Go back and get two Stevensons."

Elizabeth was far from understanding why she was not to read his books.

"I'll be very careful of them," said she.

"Careful?" said Templeton. "You needn't trouble yourself. Pitch 'em down the sink spout, for all me. Do anything but read 'em. You needn't explain. I know what's happened. You've seen that infernal paper in the *Pierian,* and you've been cramming on me so as to be able to tell a satirist again when you meet him." Elizabeth was looking at him gravely, with soft adoring eyes. He could read the look, but he thought she was adoring the satirist she had been taught to find in him. "Elizabeth," said he as persuasively as he might have spoken to Sally, "don't

believe 'em for a minute. It's a joke, that's what it is. They're pulling my leg. They want to see how much an old duffer can swallow. Don't you gulp at it, too."

She shook her head and her eyes were dreamy. He had not blurred the picture. And Pat had let him in for this.

"I wanted to tell you," she was saying, rather shyly, "I wrote a paper on you myself, and the *College Athena* took it. I had to quote Mr. Templeton—your brother—because it was founded on what he said. I took his theory of your work, but I could give further instances. I almost thought I'd read you more carefully than he."

What was he to do? insist that it was a grotesque joke, a muddy by-water of commercial agitation? Better not: she wouldn't believe him. It would be only a part of his exquisite modesty or the bravado of pride Pat threw about him in a world that had hitherto failed to value him.

He opened the door for her to go out into the April dusk and, if she should be lucky, find more beguiling things than the achievements of modern satire. He followed, and walked along with her by the field path. It was an enchanting dusk, the willows by the brook a mist of yellow, and, among the evergreens farther on, an incredible brightness of new leaves. To Elizabeth, it was not only April, but a further wonder: a great man was walking with her. That would have been enough but, for the first time, her eyes were turned inward and she recognised her happiness and found it beautiful. This was the newness of life.

She called it spring, not knowing it was an aspect of what men call love. He was wondering how to break the distorted image Pat had set up before her, and she was tremulously aware of him. All this Red House family seemed to her exciting in their unlikeness to herself and her bleak inheritance. For Mrs. Templeton she had no affection, but continued disapproval in that she let her house run itself as it might. But Amy was a creature of exquisite habit and tradition, and therefore her despair. It was perhaps because of her very fineness, Elizabeth concluded, that she could neglect the service of life and seem to do no actual wrong. Sally she adored breathlessly, in the way the dusty traveler adores the dryad he sees on the fringing woodland along his road, without hope of ever exchanging a word in what would have to be an unknown tongue; but Templeton was all that became a man. Sometimes she wondered amazedly how it could seem to Sally to dare play childish tricks on him; but she never let herself wonder what it must be to Amy to ignore him and yet possess him utterly. For to Elizabeth marriage was a solemn covenant. You loved utterly and you possessed utterly. But to-night neither fortunate woman was here to break the crystal medium where he moved with her alone, and she knew the touch of ecstasy. He was still trying, in a blundering fashion, to batter down the little trumpery god Pat had set up before her and invite her eyes to the vista the small gods had blurred: the vista piercing the obscurities of neglect and misconception to the Titans of the past where they live in their silence, shedding their beauty only when they are sought.

"We won't quarrel about my distinguished abilities," he was saying. "You'd only call me shy. But the fact remains that I'm a modern, no better than the rest, not a millionth part as good as some. You can't judge us. We're too near. We're all looking at ourselves in the glass out of our vanity boxes, and the glass flashes at you and blinds your eyes. And we're making such an infernal racket chanting our own praises you don't hear yourself think. No, Elizabeth, you let us alone and go back to the ancients. Read about Helen on the walls of Troy, and undying love and death. Nothing's too big to be written about, but some things are too small. Don't pick up the pins. Spend your life trying to find the gates of the city, all gold and pearl."

He was talking at random, not very good talk, he felt, but perhaps academic enough to beguile her from her present scent on the track of great achievement. He tried to enchant her with literature, and he had enchanted her with himself. They entered the woods fringing the back road; the lure of April and the coming night fell upon him also, and he stopped.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Listen to it. I don't know what. It's wood magic, I suppose. You can hear the grass grow."

Elizabeth stopped, irresponsibly happy, and the more that she saw no reason for it. Templeton was listening to the spring, and she was listening to him. Suddenly there came up her a sense of being watched. The wood spell was broken because there was something human in the wood. Her eyes, fixed on a point directly in front of them, wavered, to the right, to the left. In a space

between two birch trees she saw a figure, the slende outline, the white face above, and knew it for her mother, and the palace of dreams he had built for her fell with a clangor like that of arms. The old ironies that lived with her every minute when she was not in Red House came back and jeered at her. Or rather, they had never gone. Not since her mother had spoken so passionately on the night Templeton walked home with her had Elizabeth lost the sense that she was being spied upon and guarded against the evil her mother had conjured up. She felt a violent physical sickness of revolt against going into the house where she lived the few uneasy hours in the twenty-four until she could hurry back to happy tasks again. But something had to be done now, at once, before Eunice came out from the bushes and perhaps broke down before them. She would break down. Her suspicions were horrible, but mother love was behind them. Now Elizabeth spoke, almost, it seemed to her afterward, without her own volition, and her voice sounded hoarse and rough.

"Good night. No, don't come with me. I've got to run."

She did forthwith break into a run, leaving Templeton staring after her, sped along the wood path, passed her mother's hiding-place without turning her head, and did not halt until she reached home and found Enoch standing at the door. He wore the worried look habitual with him now, and, without abating a jot of its gravity, held back the screen for her to enter.

"I've kind o' got on tenterhooks, you're both off so," said he. "She come home an' went over the house

like a scairt rabbit an' then she put for out-door. Well, I'm glad you're here."

Elizabeth passed him with a smile as reassuring as she could make it. But when her back was safely toward him, she screamed out at him, knowing he could not hear.

"You let me alone," she kept crying, and frightened herself in the end. "Why can't you let me alone?"

Then she heard his voice again at the door and knew he was assuring her mother that he was glad she, too, had got home, and ran up to her chamber, like a rabbit, she thought, remembering what he had said, and fell on her knees and buried her face in her pillow. But she was not to be allowed to calm her disordered faculties. Again, as she had in the woods, she felt a human presence and the demand of eyes. She started to her feet and saw her mother standing in the doorway, fierce, dishevelled, working her hands in that distracted motion common to the race.

"You can't go over there again," Eunice broke out miserably. "We won't either of us go. There's no need of sayin' anything either. Let 'em get their own dinners. Let 'em keep what they owe us. I guess we can get along without it. We ain't so far down as that, anyway."

Elizabeth saw happiness ebbing from her, if she was never going to Red House again, never to breathe its air of strange fragrances beyond anything she had known, never to hear Templeton's grave, kindly voice as he gave her a passing word to show her he was not forgetful of the wretched world which he had entered against his will, though, being there, he was standing

by to keep her company. She was being pushed out of the spot where she loved to live, and had at least a fleeting foothold. She must fight for it, this land of her delight. She advanced, and stood facing her mother, quite near her in the dusk now rapidly falling. She was so near that the dusk was not enough to veil the wild disorder of her mother's look. Eunice seemed like a woman in deep grief, bewildered by it and, in the country phrase, not knowing which way to turn. But to Elizabeth her emotion only made her the more shocking. Eunice was suspecting her of hideous things, her daughter who could read Latin, and Templeton so immeasurably above them both.

Elizabeth spoke, savagely, shuddering at the sound of her voice and unable to subdue it.

"I won't go. You can't make me. They're all I've got, and I won't leave them. Never! never!"

Her mother stood staring at her for a moment, mysteriously and horribly hurt. Then she spoke, with a little moan Elizabeth found exasperating because it hurt her in turn, and she would not be influenced, she would not be hurt.

"All you've got!" moaned Eunice. "All you've got!"

Passionate words leaped to Elizabeth's lips. "Yes," she might have said. "All! Do you think I've got you, stained and smeared by that—" Her thoughts stumbled. She could not speak of him. Words were surging in her mind, but she could not say them. For it was still dreadful to her to accuse her mother of what no woman should have done. The silence between them was terrible enough. Speech would bring about a new community of knowledge, degrading

to them both. Like two marble women they stood staring, and suddenly a weakness, a failing, ran through Eunice. Her muscles relaxed. She bent her head and seemed to shrink within herself. Her eyes fell before Elizabeth's.

"All right," she mumbled. "If you must, you must, I s'pose. I'll keep on as long as you do."

Her head still bent, she turned about and Elizabeth heard her go faltering down the stairs.

XXIII

Champ had finished his book of little novels in verse. It lay on his work-room table, ready for the publisher, if he could find one. Old Stephen urged him to print it himself, with all the bravery of type and binding the Calvert money could buy; but Champ refused. He did not greatly respect the market-place, in this day of friendly boosting, but he was not going into literature privately printed. And he had slender hope of the big market's wanting him. The editors had given him a foretaste of what he was to expect. He had offered three or four of his little novels to the magazines, and they had come back with civil rejections. One editor asked him disconcerting questions. Where was his passion, where his gush of feeling? The verses were admirably correct, but they left him cold. Indeed, several of these regretful arbiters were chilled. One accused him of imitation because he dealt in forms of verse not at present in vogue, and still another complained of the cold.

"What the deuce!" said Champ, flinging this last letter to Sally, where they sat on a sunny bank in the Calvert woods one April day, and saw the further reaches blue with violets. "Has my stuff been through a refrigerating process? What's the matter with me anyway? Leave 'em cold, do I? Do I leave you cold, Sabrina Fair?"

For a moment Sally did not answer. She was bend-

ing her eyes on the note, and her pretty brows were knit. Indeed, she was very fair. Sally had to her credit two months of irresponsible happiness. She had had her father's company, mother had religiously let her alone, being too wise with woman's cunning to jar the alchemy crystallising something between her and Champ, and she and Champ saw each other daily. They read together: nothing instructive, nothing conforming to the fashion of the time, but poetry, always the result of an idle choice. Sometimes she lunched with him and his father, for Old Stephen had made it pathetically evident that she could always sweeten an hour for him. Sometimes she dined, and Templeton came early for her and talked a while by the fire. She had never abandoned her wish to do something friendly for Champ, and she frankly owned to herself that nothing could be kinder than to remove him from the claws of the pretty feline who was likely to be still in pursuit. Now Champ lay there and watched her, as she pondered, and he saw the spring in her face. Happiness had thrown its bloom upon her as on Elizabeth. You could fancy her trembling to life with all its subtle influences, breathing out responses to it with every breath. Champ's face, as he watched her, was moved, not by the longing seldom apart from a youth's delight in a maid, but something more like tenderness, temperate but sweet. She looked up, folded the letter and threw it back to him, smiling a little as if it did not matter much.

"He's got to say something," she remarked. "All that business about leaving him cold—they all say that. I shouldn't mind it, Champ, not a bit."

"You're a cocky person, aren't you?" said Champ. "You always seem to think you know."

"It's father," said Sally. "I'm well grounded in father. That's why you can bet on me to be right. If there's one thing I know, it's that: father can't be wrong."

"He isn't far wrong," said Champ. "As to my verse, anyhow."

"He liked your sonnet about the 'cool nymph.' How do you know he wouldn't like this?"

"I asked him to read it."

"You did! Good for you. What did he say?"

"He was a brick. Wrote me a long review. He said, Sabrina, that he could see my intention in it, but I hadn't made it plain. He said I was still fumbling round for a medium and I hadn't got it."

"Fumbling round?" said Sally. "That isn't like him. It isn't kind enough."

"Well, those weren't his werry words, but to that effect. He said, from what he made of me, I was still in the dark forest. Youth, I found he meant."

She was intent upon it.

"The dark forest," she said. "So the dark forest is youth! What else does he make of you?"

"As to youth, he said that was, of course, the glory and the dream, and if I'd got one of the ever-springing fountains in me, youth was precisely the time for it to spout. Look at Keats! But he didn't know how much talent, genius, aptitude, whatever you call it, I really had. It was evident I was discontented, and that made the emotional parts sound angry. I might have wings. He didn't know. But if I had, I was

simply batting round and beating them against conditions I hated. Then he said I seemed to realise that, and tried to retrieve myself, and the stuff fell down, got low blood pressure, in fact, and all the life went out of it. He didn't say it like that, of course. It read mighty well. But it's to that effect. I gathered he thought I wanted to do something rather swagger and didn't quite know how to pull it off. He said Stevenson said something like that about Prince Otto."

Sally was practical.

"But didn't he tell you how he thought it could have been done—I mean, some way he'd have liked better?"

"Oh, yes. He said I didn't see any beauty in the present way of taking things. No more did he. But when I ran away from it, back five or six hundred years, it was evident I didn't like that any better. I wrote without conviction. I didn't care a hang about my Sirs and Ladies, and plumed knights and spears and halberds. I set up a lot of marionettes and tried to move their joints, and they simply pranced up and down and never got anywhere. If it had been a very high type of poetry, I could have pulled it off; but it simply wasn't."

"Then really he turned it down."

"No, not precisely. He said I might take a group of moderns—discontented, same as I am—and make them run away into some sort of earthly paradise and begin the scheme of creation over again."

"And could you?"

He shook his head.

"No, I don't see it that way."

Templeton would have smiled if he could have heard his own shy gift so summarily rejected. He had liked Champ very much, as he read his little novels. Here was youth, at the beginning of the road, quivering under the discontents that beset him who was nearer the end and, in a flush of self-forgetful sympathy, he tossed youth his own little plot to see if it could make it into a call to the others who were also pining for the songs of Zion in a strange land. It would have hurt him extraordinarily to find the average man messing up his wistful visionings; but here was a son of his own spirit, and he gave him the precious gift gladly, as a bit of youth's inheritance. But youth perhaps hadn't got homesick enough. It "didn't see it that way."

"Isn't he great?" cried Sally. "Champ, don't you think father's great?"

"Immense," said Champ. "I knew he was. You see I figure it out like this. Your father's got a moral nature."

"Oh, yes, moral!"

"I mean, he has the rightness of it. He's always fitted the world to standards, the way I see him, and when it comes to placing a thing he couldn't be sloppy to save his life. He's *there.* You can't buy him, I mean, you can't muddle him by publishers' blurbs or the noise of claques. He'd laugh at you."

"Champ," said Sally, "I love you for that."

"Thanks!" said Champ, grinning.

"To think you see him, after this little while, just as I've known him all my life. And that's why you took the poems to him and not to Pat, for instance?"

Champ's eyebrows went up.

"Pat!" he said. "Not on your life. He's a good salesman, that's all Pat is. I'm not out to sell."

"But," said Sally, "is it going to make any difference about the little novels? Shall you tinker them some more?"

He shook his head.

"Can't. They're as good as I can do 'em. No, I'm either going to burn 'em or put 'em away to rot. He's right. There's nothing in 'em. And maybe there's nothing in me."

"I don't believe," said Sally, "you've got anywhere near finding out what is in you. Things are too easy for you, Champ."

"They're not easy," said he quietly. "I don't get my own way."

"No, and you give up your way a lot. You gave up to your father when you invented Old London to keep him quiet while you wrote your book."

"That wasn't invented. It just happened."

"After all, you and your father want the same thing, really. He wants to build up something lasting with his money and he doesn't quite know how."

"Oh," said Champ, "you see that, do you?"

"He's talked to me," said Sally. "I know just what your father wants."

"How does it strike you? 'Ideas of grandeur,' that sort of thing?"

"Not a bit of it. His money is power. It's a terrible power. It frightens him. And it isn't enough to chuck it away in charities——"

"But he does," said Champ. "I couldn't begin to tell you. He wouldn't let me. There's one thing that's

never out of his mind. That's in memory of my mother. Because she died of it."

"Yes, but he wants something besides. He's a hard-headed little gentleman, but he's got a side to him, Champ,—well, you could describe it. I can't. He loves beautiful things, and he doesn't talk about them because he wouldn't know what to say. But he loves them. And he wants to make them and have them last. If you'd build Parthenons all over the place, 'way down the back road, he'd be perfectly happy."

"Yes," said Champ, "until he saw how they looked. No, he can't have his Parthenons. So far, he can only have me, and I'm not up to the job. What the devil's the matter with me, Sally?"

"You're too rich, I tell you," said she. "You came through the war all right, but it would have been better for you if you'd been gassed and poor and had to support a wife and three children. You wouldn't have had time to sulk."

"Do I sulk?" he asked, and Sally loved the look of his deprecating eyes.

"Awfully. But, dear old duffer, it's only because you're like your father. You want something permanent, and you call it beauty. And you see so much ugliness in the life we're all living that you've about given up the job. Champ, I wish you knew more fellows as nice as you are. I wish you'd play with 'em more."

She did not dare to say she wished he'd cut the Irene Renfrew gang.

"The fellow I have most to do with just now," said Champ, a little obstinately, "is Ormond."

"Your in-door man?"

"Yes. Outside the house, he calls me Champ. I can't make him do it, in. He says he's a union man and that isn't his in-door job. We were in France together. He's great stuff."

"All right," said Sally. (She was tempted to say, "I know how it is, for I could make a chum of our Elizabeth, if she wasn't in love with father and you hadn't talked about her dusky bloom.") "But there must be a lot of other fellows you knew in France. Or at Harvard. What's become of them? Why don't you have 'em down here? You need somebody to play with."

"I've got Ormond," said he adequately, "and I've got you. But, in point of fact, I do see 'em, except the ones that are abroad. Of course there are some over here; but it happens they're all playing the literary game, and doing it the way I can't."

"What do you mean by that!"

"Breaking out all over in something they call poetry, like a rash, and then 'telling the world.' No! one writes novels, so called. Lord!"

"Ah," said Sally wisely, "they'd say you don't play the literary game only because you don't have to."

"Precisely. But I'd be hanged first. Well, old girl, you're a lot like your father. I'm going to call you Marginal Notes. Much obliged."

His mind, according to its negligent habit when they were together, strolled off, busying itself about something else. Sally, when he got lost in one of these reveries, thought he treated her like a much respected dog, another man, or a wife. Thinking this last, she felt

her face hot, and Champ looked up at her and enquired, with interest:

"What are you blushing for?"

"I thought of something," said Sally. "It made me ashamed of myself."

"You must never be ashamed," said Champ, idly. "You're perfect, Sabrina Fair."

"Yes, I am perfect," said she. "That's understood."

"Didn't you know," said Champ, "I took my Isabel from you? And the only reason the story turned out so rotten was that somebody else had found the words for you, though he was mad, poor chap! 'As chaste as ice, as pure as snow.' After that, how can a poor journeyman author say anything? Sally!"

"Yes," said Sally. His brief interest in her had faded. He had a certain grave concern over her, but that was all. If she did not at once admit him to her mind, he never pressed his way. In that kindly fashion, men treated women they liked, admired, and never loved. But he had called her name.

"Yes," she said again.

"I had another letter, to-day," said Champ.

"Yes," said Sally. She guessed what was coming and her heart gave an eccentric beat or two.

"From Irene," said Champ. "They've been on the Riviera these last three months. I don't know whether you know."

She did know. Old Stephen had told her, weeks ago, with the brisk announcement that, now that girl was out of the way, Champ could have some peace. Was it the invasion of his peace Champ expected, she wondered, or did the little feline keep the power they

had, these hunters of men, of moving him, tiring him with the call he must, in the manner of men, obey? She sat quite still, her hands folded. He should make the form of his confession what he pleased. She would not help him out. Presently he glanced up at her, and his eyes were troubled.

"Why don't you say something?" he asked irritably. "Didn't you hear me? She's come back."

Sally looked at him as neutrally, she hoped, as he was looking at her. "Be a man," she adjured herself. And Champ, who did not know why he was raising the ghost of Irene, except that its walking made him uneasy, now he found it was again to walk in his direction, wondered what he expected her to say. He was simply uncomfortable and he had fled to mother. And still she would not answer.

"You don't want me to tell you about it?" he asked, somewhat moved by her silence. "You aren't interested?"

"I'm awfully interested," said Sally promptly. "But maybe you don't need to tell me. Maybe I know."

"What do you know?" he asked abruptly.

"Well, for instance," said Sally, "I suppose you were engaged to her once, and you're not now. I suppose you might be again if——"

"If what?" he asked peremptorily.

But that she could not supply, in words: if the little feline, reënforced by the magic of absence, again brought her arts to bear, if she betrayed him by the spell women use to betray men to the ends nature has decreed for them, and if the unseen powers Sally believed in so simply, refused to help him.

"I can't tell you, Champ," said she. "Men have their code of honor. Women have, too."

"You don't like her," pursued Champ. "Is it so bad you won't talk?"

"Not to you," said Sally. "Champ, do you know what's going to happen?"

"No," said he.

"Do you know this violet bank is the very spot where I found you the day she was running away from you in her green doublet and hose?"

"No," he said violently, recalling more than she.

"Of course not! Men do forget. And if you don't go to find her, and if you and I sit here long enough, we shall see her coming through the woods."

"Well," said Champ, out of his consciousness that he had looked very much of a fool that other day and was about to look like a fool again, "stay here and try it."

Sally rose and brushed the leaves from her lap.

"No," she said soberly. "I'm going home."

He, too, got up and she found him looking at her from a strange antagonism. The look hurt her. Not so was it that men regarded each other, and she and Champ could not cease to be two men. He took a step toward her, reached out his hands and laid them on her wrists and held them.

"Sally," said he, "you're behaving like the devil to-day. What makes you?"

Her body was weak with its craving to get away from him. The poetry her father had read to her broke over her in waves of remembered beauty and blew about her in whispering winds. She was a nymph

pursued by godhead, to find no refuge unless she could slip underground, a hidden rill, and trust to coming out safe to melt into the sea. And yet Champ was no godhead, no pursuing mortal even. It was the divine Eros that was hunting her and she was trying, out of her innocence, to turn the love born of earth into the heavenly love that is dew and benison.

"Let me go, Champ," she heard herself whispering. "Please let me go."

He did not answer, but held her wrists and looked at her, and it seemed to him that, through her eyes, he saw the April earth. This was not Sally, it was April, and the world awakening. All he wanted was to prolong the minute, studying her eyes, listening, breathing in the newness of things. And suddenly he was aware that she was whispering to him:

"You frighten me, Champ. It's Sally, you know. You've forgotten it's Sally. Don't frighten me."

Of course! He was awake again. How could she know, when he hadn't known himself? It was wood magic that was on him, a touch of April, just as men are moon mad or get a touch of sun. He unclosed his fingers from her wrists, slowly, with a rueful desire to do it tenderly. What to say?

"Sally!" he began, and could not manage more. She was smiling bravely, trying to make everything as it had been before. But it couldn't be, he knew. He had walked into a dream and, whether she knew it or not, he had dragged her with him.

Her composure had come back.

"You're fagged," said she, with a return to the self he knew. "I don't wonder. Books aren't finished

every day, even books that have to be scrapped. I'm going now. You'd better stay a bit, till the trees look like trees again."

She turned into the path and went on with her light step, leaving him looking, not at her, but at the trees. Again, how did she know? The trees hadn't looked like trees, the wood hadn't been a wood. He had been too long in the region of faerie while he wrote the romantic stories of men and women he had thought too passionately alive to be written about in prose. He must, as she said, look at the trees until they were trees again.

Sally, quickening her pace as soon as she rounded a bend in the path, went hurrying along toward home, again, as it had been when he held her wrists, a nymph flying from imperious love. She forgot his danger in the magic wood, for she had meant it when she told him if he stayed long enough Irene would seek him there. She was shaken by the consciousness of having been so near him in his April madness. To her, he was a poet moved by poetic ecstasy and, though he did not know it, she, too, had been a celebrant.

And he did stay until, strangely, Irene came to him. It may be she was led by her own uneasy spirit, it may even be that Sally's intensity of prophetic fervor had summoned her, but it is true that, as Champ stood there on the violet bank, getting his mind into order again, he heard her step and saw her coming. She was at her girlish best, not jaded by hard living, but fresh from the sea and, not an insignificant addition, in a wisp of a Parisian gown. She was two steps away from him, she was there, not brazenly melting into

his arms, but naïvely, girlishly, like a loving child. Champ received her, and they kissed. Irene had learned things in absence. One was that, either from some tricksy fate of hers or because she bungled the game of speech, it played her false. Now she was returning to the pure nature of the damask cheek, the compelling lips. She risked no word; she was thinking furiously, as she always did in these latter days when he seemed so ready to repulse her. But Champ was not thinking. She was simply a part of the wood, a messenger of the divine Eros to slip into the place of Sally now Sally had gone. As they stood there, her head sank upon his shoulder. She seemed as free from guile as the trees themselves, and as full of magic.

"I'll go back with you," said he. "Your car out there?"

She withdrew herself, and stood with one finger on his arm, quaintly, he thought, but prettily. It was as if she said good-bye, but could not let him go.

"No," she said, in a low tone unlike her voice as he remembered it. Sometimes he thought it the shrilling of an insect on a burning day; now it had a sweetness. "Don't come with me. I've seen you, I know you're here. I'd rather go alone."

And she, too, slipped away from him, and left him like Apollo in his grove.

But Champ was not Apollo. He was a young man who could find his way about the arcades of romance, and he knew what tricks the woods can play on you. The distance closed upon the fleeting picture, and he lacked desire to pursue. His one emotion now was shame. It poked him in the ribs with a rally-

ing forefinger, and he tried to laugh with it. But he could not. "Chump!" he muttered, meaning Champney Calvert. And precisely as it had been before, it was going to be again. If he wasn't a philandering jackass, he and Irene were again tentatively pledged.

XXIV

Sally went home to her father and found him sitting on the east porch, holding a letter in his hand and staring at the lovely day. Red House looked anything but a ruin, she thought, in this glamour of spring with the trees and vines so kindly; but her mind was really on Champ, and she was cherishing her wrists where he had gripped them. She could feel the touch now, and she was not sorry. It was a part of her allegiance to take his moods as she took the weather. And weather did change. There might be clearing for him by and by.

The honeysuckle had come out greenly, and there was a robin's nest in the upper tangles. Templeton smiled absently at her as she entered and took a chair near the little table where he now threw his letter. But when he saw how serious she was, his own look changed to an alert concern.

"Anything up?" he asked. "Where's mother?"

The implication was innocent and Sally accepted it without a smile. She did not answer, but her chin began to quiver.

"Sally, what is it?" said he.

She could hear Elizabeth beating eggs in the kitchen, a safe domestic sound. It seemed to make a cover for shy secrecies.

"Irene has come home," she said simply, and put her hand to her trembling mouth.

"Well," said Templeton. "Well?"

This was ineffectual, but all he had for her. Could he ask why she cared? He had an idea girls were still protected by what had once been called a proper pride. Sally shouldn't be made to give herself away. But she was anxious to give herself away, and with the utmost simplicity. She went on.

"She has written to Champ. It will be exactly as it was before."

How did she know how it was before? Had Champ transgressed the code and whimpered to her? Templeton thought not.

"But it needn't to be any way he doesn't want it," he ventured. "A man doesn't have to——"

"Oh, yes, he does," said Sally when he stopped, distrustful of his evidence. "You don't know, father. You haven't seen girls performing. I have."

So, because he had not been coached by modern girls he "didn't know!" That wouldn't matter. He was willing to accept even his own ineptitude if only he hadn't got to find his Sally, in some last analysis, smudged in places by the folly of a clever fool.

"If you mean," said he, "she's going to vamp him, in the admirable language of the day, I'm afraid you and I've got to stand by and see him suffer that exotic process. See what nice words I'm using, Sally. This is my colyum style. I don't often spill it round in polite conversation, but you're a very special client and I aims to please."

Sally was not hearing him. If she guessed he was playing the fool to give her time for recovery, she gave no token. She spoke, passionately, he thought.

"It's such a waste. He mustn't bother himself about her. He's got to be kept clean."

"Don't you think you'd better let him be clean in his own way?" asked Templeton gravely. "It would be a man's way. It mightn't be yours. Can't you see a man had better live in a man's way?"

"Not Champ," said Sally. Her eyes brimmed over. "Don't you see, father, I can't let him be—foolish."

She had hesitated for the word, and it proved inadequate. But Templeton filled out her meaning. She could see Champ tragically lost to her, but she could not leave him to his puddling in the unclean stream of childish folly.

"You sound as if you cared a lot about it," said he, trying to take it with composure. "You love him, don't you?"

"Yes, dear," said Sally. Her face had paled. She looked like some historic maid destined for sacrifice. "I do love him. But that's nothing. He doesn't care about me. I don't believe I want him to. He ought to have something—something lovelier, don't you see? Why, that's the point of Champ's whole life, wanting loveliness, beauty—that's it, Champ's a poet."

The last words had come hurrying out in their disordered sequence, and Templeton shook his head.

"But you are lovely," he allowed himself to say. "There's nothing lovelier."

Sally put that by with a little impatient motion of the hand.

"He ought to have some one just made," said she, "right out of the morning, not girls that know the—the under-world."

Curious phrase! what did she mean by the underworld? She was quite ready to tell him. She had this in common with the precocious age.

"All this about sex," she was hurling at him, white-faced, angry-eyed, as if, in some desperate battle, she were scooping up pebbles and storming him. "I've been talked to, father, talked to." In this, he could see the girl he was always to call a slut. "And it's all so knowing. It isn't indecent. You don't have to say you won't listen to it. It's being advanced and brave and free, and how the world is founded on it. I'm smeared with it. Why, I couldn't let Champ love me if he wanted to. I'm not good enough."

Templeton felt a spiritual nausea. There was no loveliness in life he believed in as he believed in Sally. He tried to think she was hysterical, needing only to be shocked back to an ordered state of mind.

"Get hold of yourself," said he. "What difference does it make what that little ass has told you? She's only a gnat, a midge, born out of this time that thinks it's formulated birth and death and hasn't got beyond bacteria. The bacteria are there all right, but they're there to nourish life, not make it rotten. Are you going to let yourself be bent and twisted by that idiot with her promiscuous marriages? Be a man, Sally,—and let Champ be too, in his own way. If he can't, he's not the man for you."

Amazingly, she laughed. How could he have chosen the precise phrase she was always using to her rebellious mind? "Be a man, Sally!" Her mind was incessantly whispering it. She wiped her eyes, and Temple-

ton nodded at her, with his smile, never so kind for anybody as for her.

"Do you know what I know?" he asked. "You've got to go abroad with me, and to-morrow I'll get your passage."

This frightened her.

"No," said she. "No, I couldn't, dear. Don't you see how worried I am about him? I should be a million times more worried if I ran off and let him fight it out alone."

Then, like the sleeping palace come to life, something seemed to reverse the shuttles and the commonplace reigned again. Elizabeth had ceased to beat eggs. Amy arrived, walking from the station, for the spring had put new vigor into her, and Templeton and Sally went down the steps to meet her. She spied the letter in his hand, and something in her seemed to pounce.

"Is that from the *Northern Star?*" said she. The excited interrogation warmed her tired voice. "I saw one of their men to-day, and he told me they had written you for a short story in your old manner. He said they'd offered you eight hundred. Actually eight hundred!"

"Yes," said Templeton unwillingly. "Actually eight hundred."

"Haven't you something on hand?"

She paused on the upper step and Sally took her bag and went in with it, leaving them together. Templeton saw upon his wife's face the avid look he knew. He did not misread it. She was not avid of the money except as it meant recognition, public praise.

"Not precisely," said he, remembering the story he

had recovered from his relieved editor that October day when the sunset had trumpeted him to a cleaner life. He had not destroyed it. There it lay upstairs in a drawer among a welter of papers, waiting to be looked at sometime, to justify him if he grew poorer and reproached himself for a fool.

"Couldn't you do it now?" she was asking, as he held the door for her, but making no move to go in until he considered her importunity. With Amy there was never any time like the present, especially when it came to whipping up the pace. "Now, while they're interested? That's the kind of thing to be clinched."

"Not precisely now," said Templeton, following her in. "On shipboard. That's an ideal place, mind at ease, you know, and all that."

"But you'll write them," she insisted.

"Oh, dear, yes," said he amiably. "I'll write."

He continued on his way upstairs, a rueful certainty in mind. He had thought, when Sally came home, that his system of marital deception must stop, with a click. Not so could he bamboozle the parent of his child. What had become of that glittering conversion? for here was the old habit, as brave as ever. Up in his room, where the story had lain hidden, he took it out of the drawer. He sat down with it in his hand and thought of Sally. If she supposed he was going abroad to leave her with her passionate young troubles upon her, she was wrong. He might not understand them, but he did know the body could put the soul to torture and the soul had to turn about then and avenge itself on the body. He must not go too far away to know whether things were happening to Sally. As he

sat there, the extreme discomfort of life fell heavily upon him. He heard a step on the stair, Amy's perhaps. There was the story in his hand, and he tore it through the middle,—a strong story, he thought whimsically, it was so hard to tear—and again across, and hurriedly into fragments, which he dumped into a page of newspaper lying by and so into the waste-basket. There went his realism. Satire, too! he thought with a smile. He wondered if this were the way satirists commonly behaved.

XXV

Champ woke the next morning certain of one thing. He had got to see Irene and swear mightily that he loved her no better than when she went away. After the night's mental turmoil, the sweetness of her cheek was stale. To Champ, few things were baser than a man's lying to himself, almost worse, he believed, than lying to his enemy, and he had no hesitation in owning that Irene had changed as little as he. Only the light had glinted differently on her wings—of that word he thought satirically, but conceded it as a poetical convention—and dyed them richly. When he went down to breakfast, braced to meet his father, he found Old Stephen glancing at him in an obliquity indicating that doubt of his dear son's present happiness which always irritated Champ to the verge of endurance. Who wanted to be a dear son if it meant so obvious a determination to leave him unwatched that it cried louder than the third degree? They had exchanged their brief morning salutation and Champ poured himself coffee. The informal breakfast was his invention, privately resolved upon because he knew how his father hated conventional service stalking like a ghost.

"Going to town?" asked Champ.

No, Old Stephen was not going to town.

"I'll take the roadster," said Champ. "I have to run over to Irene's. She's come home."

This news, he thought, had better be communicated as soon as possible, to save Stephen a shock. For might not Irene, with her amazing promptitude, appear? Stephen swallowed two or three times and burned himself with hastily administered coffee. But he did not venture to echo the name of Irene, and indeed hardly seemed to have heard it. Instead he proffered what he had begun to believe might be the antidote.

"Can't you get back in time to have Sally to lunch?"

Then Champ gave himself a discomfiting surprise. He had a careful system of forbearance toward Stephen as Stephen had toward him, but it ceased to serve.

"I wish," said he, "you'd stop cramming Sally Templeton down my throat."

He looked up, his eyes big, his mouth twitching in the grin that would, in another second, have accompanied a bluff repentance. But it was not alone his endurance that had given at the joints. Old Stephen's had gone as well.

"I'll thank you," said he, "not to refer to Miss Templeton in that fashion. I won't have it."

He got up, leaving his toast a wreck and, trailing his napkin in a tense hand, walked out of the room. Champ stared after him. Then he broke into a laugh. Two women, he thought, two nervous women couldn't have done worse. And all for a little fragment of a thing like Irene Renfrew! He was more amused than sorry. It would stir the old man's blood and give him something to think about, not shell shock and sons born to

be famous. Like two cats flying at each other, he thought, and then resuming their toilets on the roof. He did not follow Old Stephen, to patch up a peace, but went off to the west side to find Irene. When he passed Red House Sally was in the yard, bending over an iris bed; but he would not stop. No Sally for him until he was less of an ass. He smiled to himself, as he went, over the urban prosperity of the houses at the west as compared with the east, where it was going to remain a country solitude if he and his father could manage it by absorbing waste and farm land. When he drove up to the Renfrews', there was Mrs. Renfrew in the yard, and she came hurriedly to meet him, with an effusion of welcome surprising in its implication of relief. She was tall, she was portly, and she wore a gown so ultra modern that Champ, who was not used to going into the detail of costume, wondered what the deuce was the matter with it. Only he did think the poor lady need not have packed her plump feet into shoes of torture. But these constrictions were the last things she was thinking of. She was all mother now. She gave him both her plump hands.

"Oh," said she, "I'm so glad you've come."

"Did you expect me?" asked Champ.

"No, no, not precisely. Only I'd been praying somebody would. It's Bobby Fletcher."

"What's Bobby up to?" enquired Champ. "Where is he?"

"In Irene's bedroom."

She turned on him a look seeming to indicate that this, at least, would tell him something.

"Irene's?" repeated Champ. "What a fool place to be." As that seemed inadequate, he ventured, "Why don't you tell him to come out?"

"Oh, I would," said she fervently. "Only Irene won't let me. She's locked him in."

It began to sound like a present-day farce, but no madder than most events in that house, all circling about Irene.

"The servants, you know," said she. "We don't want them to find out. So she thought if she left him there to sober off——"

"Oh," said Champ. "That's it, is it? Where's the key?"

"Irene's got the key. There she is now."

The mother disappeared into the house with an amazing haste for so heavy a body, and Champ knew her spirit quailed before Irene, who now stood at the head of the steps, a bizarre little figure still in evening dress. She looked, and he could think of one word only: stale. She gave a little laugh of false assurance, but her lips were trembling.

"Give me the key."

He held out his hand. Her left hand was behind her back.

"Mother's told you then," she said, with that false air of ease. "It's only a joke. The gang came out last night and Bobby—he can't carry his liquor. You know that. They went about three and he couldn't be found. But I guessed. He'd wandered upstairs and tumbled into the first room he saw, and I ran up and found him there and turned the key on him. I've just been listen-

ing, but there isn't a breath. Mother's off her head about it: servants, you know! But Bobby's all right. He'll come round."

"Give me the key," said Champ. "Your mother wants the house cleared up."

"No, dear," said Irene, at her gentlest. "I couldn't do that. It isn't fair to Bobby."

"Fair to your grandmother," said Champ, in the immemorial phrase.

He drew the clenched hand out of hiding. Her fingers were white upon the key, and he opened them with a solicitous care. Either she was angry or she judged it best to seem so.

"I'll never forgive you," she said passionately. "Never!"

"Don't be a silly," said Champ. "You stay here and I'll bring him down. You'd better find your mother and tell her I'm taking him away and she can go into residence again."

He ran up the stairs, and Irene, biting her lip in doubt of what she ought to do, went into the morning room and began to play the piano with what she felt to be the abandon of an untamed soul.

Champ tried the first door he found, unlocked it and threw it open. If he had been prepared to deal summarily with Bobby, a sight of that gay adventurer restored his good humor, and he laughed. Bobby had evidently recovered, though temporarily the worse for wear. He had been lying on a couch under the eastern window where the sun brought out his damaged facial attributes, and now he had risen to a sitting posture,

though the pink pillow was still dented by the impress of his cheek. One part of his anatomy evidently gave him some discomfort, for he lifted both hands to it and remarked: "Oh, what a head!"

Champ broke again into derisive laughter. He had never seen even Bobby so futile and altogether incapable. Now Bobby roused a little and asked him the question on the lips of swooning maidens in the older books: "Where am I?" But as he seemed about to recline again, Champ gave him a cant to leeward, and he enquired: "That you, Champ? Rotten liquor here. Where do they find it?"

"Get up," said Champ. "My car's down there, and I'll take you along. And be as little of an ass as you can. You've disgraced yourself good and plenty, as it is."

Bobby was sober. He got to his feet and stretched.

"Disgraced myself?" he repeated. "Good God! who knows it? Anybody but you, old man?"

Champ was now taking him down the stairs, and as they passed the morning room door a flood of angry music came rolling out. Now Bobby knew. The hall was home to him, and he quieted.

"Renfrew's!" said he, in a burst of relief. "Must have asked me to spend the night. Decent of 'em. I've got to say good-bye."

But Champ convoyed him out at the front door and down to the car where Bobby protested he should love to wait for him; "wait all day, wait all night." And, in spite of his sobered condition, he broke into a stave which was precious to him, he averred, because his dear old grandfather used to sing it:

"Bound to ride all night,
Bound to ride all day.
Bet my money on a bob-tailed nag,
Somebody bet on a bay.

"Fine old chap," said Bobby, who had not, by getting the liquor out of his legs, managed to purge it from his speech. "Good old stock! best ever!"

Champ ran back to the house. The angry music had ceased, and Irene met him at the door. Again she was exquisitely gentle, and thanked him prettily.

"Though you needn't have bothered," she said. "It's only Bobby. He never means any harm."

What had Champ to say to her? What had his coming meant but to tell her he did not intend to come again? But how was a man going to do it? They hooted down conventions, her gang, yet when you found yourself up against the old code of man's behavior to woman, despising the gang didn't help you. The code was still there, written fair and large. You couldn't transgress it without feeling yourself déclassé.

"Won't you come over to-night?" she was asking, with that persuasive gentleness. "They won't be here. I'll see they're not."

He shook his head.

"When?" she persisted.

He continued looking at her and said nothing. She seemed stricken.

"You mean you're not coming any more? You'll never come?"

"Irene," he countered, "you don't want me——"

Her face brightened.

"Oh," she said, "you're sore about Bobby. Bobby

doesn't count, even if he does do fool things. You know that."

He shook his head.

"No," said he, "it's not Bobby. It's simply that when you take me as I really am, you don't have any fun with me. I've got a permanent grouch. I don't like your friends——"

Her face took on the drawn look he knew.

"Say it," she said bitterly. "You don't like me. If you liked me, you'd ask me to give my friends up. You'd make me so happy I should forget all about them. I'm the one you don't like. Say it."

But he said nothing except a futile:

"Don't, Irene. You're just drawing blood out of both of us. What do you want to do it for?"

She was beyond warning now. He never believed in the reality of her hysteria. He found in it her method of attaining a passion that might move him, but was never real.

"I know," she said. "I know what I know."

"Don't be a goose, child," said he. "There's nothing about me you can't know if it interests you."

She went to a desk in the corner and opened a little drawer.

"Come here," she said. "Look."

He followed her and glanced over her shoulder. A half circlet of withering leaves lay there.

"It was in the woods," she said, "where I found you yesterday. I picked it up when you weren't looking."

"Why, yes," said Champ. "Sally'd been there. We were talking. I remember now she was doing something with her hands. What of it?"

"If I die," said she passionately, "I'll haunt those woods. Remember that, when you're there with her making wreaths. I've got the courage to die, Champ. You don't think it, but I have. I've the courage to drive through that road at night and bang myself into a tree. Or run over the slope across the road. Do you believe it?"

"O Lord!" said Champ, and reflected that he might as well be a husband, for all the peace he was getting.

"Champ!" she was whispering. She held out both hands to him. In another instant the slim arms would be about his neck. This she was, not from any temperamental urge, but because she believed, poor little feline, that there was one game to be played to the point of madness: sex, and again sex. He gave her a nod not even friendly, and went.

"Bobby!" he called back to her. "He's in the car in the sun. I've got to rub him down and give him a warm mash. I'll take your forgiveness to him, shall I?"

XXVI

THREE days went by before Champ made it in his way to see Sally, and then something in him, perhaps a little pulse beginning to beat, told him the lustral rites of absence had done their work and he was free of even an unwilling folly. Not attempting to debate it further, he went over to Red House and, finding nobody in the front, wandered round to the side and looked in at the kitchen window where he had often seen her at work, bent on learning from Elizabeth. There they were, two handmaids in according blue. Sally with that look of being, though so young, in some way set apart from youth, and Elizabeth, in her dusky beauty, like a dark dahlia, though there the likeness failed: for the dahlia has no fragrance. She was gravely coaching Sally in the matter of chickens, demonstrating from the plump individual on the table before them.

"I can answer for him," said she. "He's last fall's brood and we've had him shut up, fattening. Enoch says he's as likely a bird as you need to see."

Sally poked a finger into his breast.

"They do that," said she, "women do. I've seen 'em."

To Champ, it was a pretty act in the comedy of youth; he laughed aloud, because they were so enchanting in it, and they looked up. Sally, too, laughed

with a quick pleasure in seeing him again. But Elizabeth took up the chicken and carried it away, as if it had ceased to fit the scene. Also, she might cherish a grave reason for thinking it improper to laugh with them when she was only help.

"How are you, Sabrina Fair?" he asked, feeling suddenly at peace with himself. "Hasn't it been a long time?"

"Yes, indeed," said Sally, looking at him with what seemed to him a satisfactory degree of frank affection. It warmed, without scorching, as ill-regulated fervor had the fault of doing. It cooled also, like the salty breeze from the sea. "I almost think you've changed."

"I haven't, Sally," said he. "Honest, I haven't. Only there's one thing we mustn't do any more. We mustn't go to the woods."

She did not ask why. She knew. He was afraid the Belle Dame would come on them and cast an evil magic. Well, she was rather glad to stay away, if he would stay with her. The little feline had somehow a power of hurting, and even the thought of her was often more than she could bear. She looked at him with a smile as brilliant as if mysteriously meant to charm.

"Very well, sir," said she, "we go no more to the woods."

And she began to sing *"Nous n'irons plus au bois,"* with so piercing a pathos that he was enchanted and sang with her. Pretty sight, pretty sounds! youth and beauty bringing in the spring. There was but one to see them, and that was a pity. They felt her eyes and turned to her. Elizabeth, also enchanted, stood

by the pantry door. Very often Elizabeth had to remember her manners, founded on straining ideals, and she did not easily forget herself; but she was completely lost, seeing that this was what life could be. Sally put up her hand to Champ, and they stopped on a phrase. For in that moment Sally saw Elizabeth truly, something as young as herself yet defeated in the ways of youth. She had felt a half patronising respect for the girl's dull ambitions and her duteous behavior, and always there was that hidden streak of jealousy; but now she began tumultuously to prevail upon her. Sally, with all her reserve, was subject to this likelihood of being carried off by the horses of the sun.

"You must sing, too, Elizabeth," she commanded, very charming in her imperative mood. "Yes! put down that dish and we'll teach it to you. Why, it's French, child! don't you see? You want to read French. Don't you want to sing it, too?"

Elizabeth came slowly, looking as if she did it because she was bidden and was half in doubt about the propriety of it; but really she longed fiercely to come. Sally, seeing how excitedly happy it made her, took her hand and drew her on.

"Come in to the piano," said she. "I'll find my French song book."

Again life at Red House stood still; it might have been a dream house and the Sleeping Beauty in it. Sally got out her book, and they not only sang *Nous n'irons plus au bois* because it seemed as if Elizabeth had to be taught it or the world wouldn't go on, but *Sur le Pont d'Avignon* and all the rest. Elizabeth for-

got her shyness and sang bravely, and Champ loved them both. That was what girls were for, he found himself reflecting: to sing with and play with and then to leave when you felt like going home and writing your poetry. If you could only do that with things: if they would play with you and let you run and not remember you any more until you came again!

XXVII

Templeton felt very much alive. He had his passage, and there was no likelihood of Pat's wanting to go with him. Pat did say he wished he could bring it about, but not just at this time. His job wasn't done, and when it was he had to place the stuff over here. He had not told what the job was, and Templeton did not ask him. It was about the first time he could commend his brother for a professional reticence, and he had for it a scrupulous respect over and above what he habitually felt for the delicate processes attendant on the written word.

"Templetons" were still going strong, and he became aware, under the mawkishness of his new importance in the public eye, that he did not know what anybody, except perhaps Pat and Amy, really thought about them. Amy he could prognosticate. She took achievement at its face value. He was a feature in the literary market and she was glad. Pat, he was aware, thought no more of "Templetons" now than he had before, but for Pat all this buying and selling was not only a legitimate business but a game. He did not take it too seriously. Never for a moment did he overrate the books that somehow, either by a lucky chance or the instinct of the publishers, ruled the passing hour. They had nothing to do with permanency. And, after all, what was permanency itself? The seasons passed, the

years grew old, temples were sacked, "dust hath closed Helen's eyes," and what was it all about anyway? Pat thought there was a good deal in not taking things too seriously.

What did Sally think of her father's late sprung celebrity? He did not know, though he fancied he found her looking at him sometimes as if she, in turn, wondered what he thought, and whether he could take so bitter a joke complacently. And it was at this time that he did a good deal of thinking about the isolation where every man lives, and the very complicated reasons there are for not breaking out of it and attempting to be known for his actual self. In the first place, he could scarcely break out without making some very ugly holes in the laurels they had been training over him, and in the second place, if he did he might be found to look a more uncouth figure than the zany they had made of him, and who would be the better for it? What did Champ think? Templeton owned to a frank curiosity about him, because he had an idea Champ was not, in a professional sense, running with the crowd. What did a youth like that who betrayed no vanity about his own work, but rather an angry grudge against its incompleteness, think of an old fellow whose modest earthly fortunes were being made by the business acumen that knew how to pull the wires?

On one of his night prowls he met Champ who turned about with him, after a desultory word or two, and they fell into talk about the prevailing fashion in books. Templeton had just reviewed one, with a light disfavor, and it was now selling by the thousand.

Champ, who had thought likewise, thanked him for pitching into it

"It gets me," he said, "what they see in it."

"They don't see anything," said Templeton, "except what they're told to see. Take my own stuff"— he was curious and he had to venture it—"you know as well as I do it's as dull as death. Don't you now? Don't hesitate."

Champ was hesitating. The minute so prolonged itself that Templeton had to laugh.

"Good man!" he said. "You don't mean to sell your soul for pottage. Don't you do it, either. Speak up now. Tell the truth and shame the devil. How would you feel if you'd written it? Come!"

"Well," said Champ, uncomfortably. "If it's satire——"

"It isn't satire," said Templeton. "I've told 'em so till I'm black in the face. And that's all the good it does. But if you say I ought to renounce my ill-gotten gains, tear up my royalty sheet and fling back my tainted money! not me! I shall take it and I shall buy chops with it and passages to Europe and first editions of books as are books. But it isn't money got from value received. It's cutpurse gold. That's a good title. You may have it."

Champ thanked him gravely, and broke out:

"I wish we didn't all have to live behind a cloud."

"So do I," said Templeton. "Jove used to, if you remember. I suppose there are a few minutes in life when we don't, under the rarest emotions, you know, like being in love. I've a suspicion that then, if there's

no claptrap about it, we do for a minute catch a glimpse of the soul, and, as somebody says, it's so beautiful it drives us mad."

"That's true," said Champ. "But it's horrible to go round saying the things people expect you to say. In a shell, that's what we are. I'm in a shell. You are, too. Now aren't you?"

"Undoubtedly," said Templeton, "the thickest one I can grow. We put our heads out once in a while, you know, though that only gives 'em a chance to bat it. Or we put it out to snap. Don't forget you can snap in self-defense."

"Now," said Champ, "here's life, just our common every-day life. I come down to breakfast. My father asks me how I've slept. It's an old-fashioned habit of his. It means all sorts of affectionate things he couldn't say to save him. I say 'Best ever,' or something else he expects; but in point of fact I may have been at my table half the night grilling over a lame-legged sonnet. So it keeps on all day. It goes into everything. We're all the time blowing up inside and at the same time acting as if we were passing cakes at afternoon tea."

"Yes," Templeton agreed, "we are mostly blowing up. But"—he took the privilege of an older man and issued warning—"if we allow ourselves to blow up actually, we're likely to bust our b'ilers, don't you see? Why!" he had a sudden vision of the things that would come of a general clarity of understanding. "Figure to yourself what would happen if we rushed out into the open and played the game our own way. I should skulk back a century or two and be a sort of second

rate Pan sitting by a river, whistling into a reed to make a sound like a bird."

"Should you?" cried Champ. "By Jove! should you? Well, I should be back somewhere, too, seventeenth century, maybe, when poetry was in the air and you'd only to jump up and grab a line and then grab another to stick on to it. What would the others do? Mr. Templeton, your Sally,—what would she do?"

Templeton thought for a moment. Should he give his Sally away to this young man? He suspected she had virtually, in a more literal sense and in her own mind, given herself away. And at any rate had the young man any right to know more about her than he could himself divine? He thought not. Better be as cursory as possible, though he liked the boy well enough to hand him a good-sized proportion of the truth.

"Sally," he said, "doesn't tell all she knows, but she's different, too, like the rest of us, under the skin. She's a creature of intuitions, and sometimes, I think, spiritual certainties. She's done a good deal of 'moving about in worlds not realised,' but at the same time you'd say she was in the garden picking peas."

"I know it," said Champ. "And the trouble is," he ended impetuously, and as if he had not considered before saying it, "you find her picking peas and she never tells you that isn't all she can do. But you get away from her and then you begin to think. You know there's a lot further you want to know. You wish she'd let you in."

"Ah," said Templeton, in an involuntary frankness, "that's the maternal side of it. Don't you know

mothers only give us what's the best for us? Then they die and we realise how silent they've been. Perhaps they've answered our questions, but they haven't demanded anything for themselves. They've only spoken what you might call the 'little language,' every day affection, and common things. But all the time there's been some kind of music inside them—'harping with their harps.'"

"Yes," said Champ. "I know."

They seemed to have wandered too far now into the mists of things, and walked on in silence until they came to the Calverts' and Templeton went on alone. Champ wasn't merely sulky, he decided, a spoiled child of wealth. He was still thinking about the little language and the human creatures behind it. Now there again was Sally, a cheerful, practical young woman if ever there was one; but every day he found his knowledge of her illuminated by what he was half guessing, half learning, of her fragmentary past, its hungers and its compensations. When she was little and her mother was so unfalteringly bringing her up by rule, the child had, out of her loneliness, conjured up the invisible playmate. (And who should say the invisible playmate was not a merciful reality? Certainly, of all persons, not he.) Again when she dipped down into the tragedy of the war, was she not, while her hands and brain were busy, probing into the deeps of the world, her heart tearing away at the issues of life and death? Sally's life, he reverently guessed, had always been far more with the unseen than here. And afterward, when she went abroad with May and was forced into solitude by the other girl's mental

strangeness, again she must have taken refuge with the unseen, imagined or imperfectly apprehended. That was what accounted for her forever referring the moral weather of her life to climatic conditions somewhere else. She knew things by instinct, often when events were coming and what should be done with them when we stumble upon them in the way, and this was not a special acumen of the senses. It was because the unseen—the Immortals, he liked to believe them—kept her so finely cognisant of the difference between the illusions and the reality of what we call life. It was loneliness that had forced her, not to earthly anodynes of speed and noise, but to the plane of being that encircles this.

And for himself: old crock, back number, any name you like, was he not still achingly alive to the beauty of all this mortal and immortal scheme, not any more transparent to him than to the wise ones who thought they knew, yet signalling him, showering him with the roses of ecstasy, or the bitter aloes of disillusion as it might happen, always ineffable and always there? We are really, he thought, not so much sustained by life as drunk with it. Sometimes we signal the miracle, sometimes we feel it descending upon us, unsummoned, like a cloud. Our eyes are blinded, our throats are choked with it. But always it challenges us, the life that is our despair and our ecstasy, and we can neither beguile nor conquer it. No wonder we betake ourselves, with such unspoken entreaties, to the little language of things and the deeds of every day. No wonder we snatch up the dull cloak of the commonplace to wrap about us when we meet our fellows in

the morning after we have endured the devastating beauty of the stars, and the obscurities of our own wakeful souls. "Hullo, old man," we say. "This hot enough for you?" and are glad to say it, the sound of being at home in mere weather is so reassuring, we take so lightly our dominion over lunch counters and money drawers, and are so confident of our intimacy with the secrets of the air. But all about us are still the inexorable mysteries waiting to lay hands on us again. Templeton was not impatient of the mysteries; he worshiped them, he was full of wonder. But he did feel that, if he could get into the solitude of ancient spaces, he could take them more simply, as Sally did. And he still believed that he could not only set his own mind in order: he could gather up his few wisps of certainty into a novel or a play.

XXVIII

When Templeton told Elizabeth he was to be abroad four or five months and asked if she could stay and run the house, she assented eagerly. This was her gift to him, though, from her lips, it seemed the gravest commonplace. He was far from suspecting her of brooding over his life, as she saw it, of wondering whether he liked it, whether he was even interested in it to the point of acceptance, or whether he had pretty well given up wishing for anything. But now he did put out his hand for something and she had loosed one of his fetters by promising to stand by, as Pat loosed another by refusing to sail with him. If he had not, Templeton was prepared to buy him off rather than be taken charge of over there and launched on some shallow wave as the tardily recognised American satirist. At that time, nothing seemed to him a doom more calamitous than to be hailed as any sort of prodigy, wearing a garland grotesquely askew, lacking the courage to pluck it off, and at the same time finding your monetary prospects swelling from the proceeds of the masquerade. His books were being steadily turned into the market, and the market was as faithfully absorbing them. He shuddered to think what his publishers' next account would show. It looked now as if he might go abroad in luxury, and travel like a profiteer, he whose dearest wish it was to

leave his memories in lonely mountain passes and unhaunted valleys.

One night he and Amy were temporarily alone in the library. It was nearing the end of her lecture season, and she was not at work. Darby and Joan they seemed to him, for an amused moment, when he glanced at her sitting by a window, her eyes absently fixed on the perfection of a lilac grove in bloom and her hands folded. He had laid down his book, a collection of verse he had just commended in his last official paragraphs before sailing, and he thought, a little satirically, that they must seem to an onlooker like the typical couple in the middle years, hoping only for a few last compensatory pleasures. And why not, though they were by no means at that farther boundary? why not a dip into the delights of liberty they had not allowed themselves before? He was just embarking on his chosen diversion; why shouldn't Amy be urged to enter upon hers?

"Tired?" he broke the silence to say.

She recalled herself and turned her face toward him. Whatever she had been thinking, it evidently had not included him. She shook her head, and he continued:

"I wonder if you've realised we're pretty comfortably off now? At least we shall be. There's Aunt Helen's bit. I've turned that in to your account,—that is, the ten thousand or so over and above what I put into bonds. But there'll be a rather juicy plum from that eminent person, the satirist we're hearing so much about now. Devil of a fellow, the satirist! I understand his royalties are mounting, as his publisher just wrote him bromidically, by leaps and bounds. You

ought to come in for something handsome out of that. You're not making engagements for next year, are you? Can't you throw it all over and take a rest? No, don't take a rest. Take a header into—something or other, whatever you'd like, and forget there ever was a lecture field. Couldn't you?"

She was regarding him in a surprised attention.

"Why, no," she said. "I couldn't give up working. It isn't a matter of money. It never has been. You've always been generous about that. It's my profession, just as your profession is yours."

Well, he supposed it was, though she had weakened her case by comparing it with his. Nobody, he thought whimsically, could be expected to see what a sorry travesty his profession was, beside the glorious yea-and-nay business a critic's life ought to be. It was not that he did not tell the truth as it appeared to him, but the issues he puddled about in seemed so shallow that he could never set sail across them for ports of high emprise. It was a pint pot he was sailing in and always had been. And her profession! If she could call it that, if it embodied the big issues she prattled about, in heaven's name let her cling to it. All he wanted was to see her cutting loose, setting sail into some long dreamed of sea, or even taking a plunge into that idleness where the spirit falls into a divine lethargy and perhaps hears a whisper of God.

"Well, at least," he found himself saying ineptly, "you'll get off somewhere and have a rest."

"Oh, I'm going to," she assured him. "I mean to take in three summer schools. I speak at two. You'd forgotten that."

"Yes," said Templeton meekly. He began to see, he told himself, why he never had conquered the art of fiction. No imagination, that was the matter with him. He couldn't even digest the possibility of his wife's having a set of such eccentric desires. "I'm afraid I did forget. Well, go ahead, old duck. The money's there, remember, and if you do feel like being on the loose, you've only to sign your name."

She thanked him prettily, as if he were not bound to share his worldly goods with her, and began to question him about transplanting his own form of story to the new atmosphere. But he wasn't to be drawn. How could he tell her what he intended, when he intended nothing? He was simply going forth to look at the world and smell it, he was so sure it had more to offer him than had been apparent heretofore. And if his play or his fiction was dormant in his mind, still it was alive. Yet he met her with a fluent version of her own thoughts, as he read them. Whatever she asked him, he answered as she would have had him and in her own language. They seemed to be having a deeply confidential talk, and Amy retired from it encouraged by this surprising proof that he was showing far more professional shrewdness than she had ever seen in him. Perhaps his big wave of popularity was doing him actual good. For herself, she had no doubt that he was as eminent as Pat had taught this little corner of the world to find him.

But to Templeton, the interview was a farcical bit of acting of which he had reason to be ashamed. He had not been lying to her according to his chosen habit, but still he was lying. A low fellow he was, he told

himself, and if ever a man needed to get out into the far spaces, to see if God would speak to him, it was he.

After that, the days ran fast to his going. On one of them, he wound up affairs at the office and took his green bag away with him for the last time. There had been humorous farewells among the fellows, but all of them so friendly that he was awkward in his gratitude and glad to get away. The green bag was empty of new books, but he had the notion, as he stepped out with it into the street, that they had filled it to bursting with their boisterous wishes. In the train, too, men came and talked him, most of them men he knew but little. They, too, were full of cordiality, and augmented it by a playful envy, saying they wished they were in his shoes, cutting loose without an assignment even, just going while the going was good. When he got down at the station, he whimsically wondered whether he mightn't consider himself a favored child of fortune and whether the green bag wasn't really crammed with rosemary, for remembrance, with even a disordered laurel or two, tribute to a travelling satirist. And there on the platform, a still more fortunate companionship, Sally was standing by herself and waving a little signal for him to come. With his first look at her he got the impression that something had happened. She was composed enough, but she was, in a sense, different, and he hurried after her. They fell into step and entered the road.

"What is it?" he asked.

She did not answer and he stopped and asked again: "What is it, Sally?"

And when again she seemed not able to speak,

though she looked at him with a face resolutely calm, he was impatient with her. For the best of reasons he was not worried. Nothing could have happened to her, for she was here.

"What is it?" he repeated. "Can't you speak?"

She did speak then, in a dry small voice.

"Wait a minute," said she. "Let's get round the bend."

That meant they would be in the privacy of the wooded road, and he humored her, but struck out fast because his alarm was mounting. In the first shadow of the woods she stopped, and he always remembered a veery sang. It seemed a fortunate moment, to stop in the spring twilight, and hear the veery sing. Sally put a hand on his arm.

"It's mother," she said quietly.

"Your mother? What has she done?"

Strangely, Amy had been so active all her life, so regardless of events outside the horizon of world happenings, that he did not see unlucky chance coming on her, but, with a cruelty he remembered whenever he remembered the singing bird, some ill-chosen thing she herself had done.

"Mother's had an accident," said Sally, in that tone of passionless calm, again as if she had desperately rehearsed the best way of telling him. "She was walking. A car came through the Calvert woods and knocked her down. Champ found her. He brought her home."

"Hurry," said Templeton. "No, don't you hurry. I must get there. Or isn't she at home?"

She held him by his sleeve.

"Yes," she said. "Let me tell you all of it. Yes, she's at home. No, we don't want a taxi. I can tell you better like this, and it won't do any good to get there. She hasn't come out from the ether. They say she can't, for hours. They didn't want me in the room."

Templeton was hurrying, and she put her hand through his arm and hurried with him.

"But why aren't you in the room?" he was saying headily. "You should have insisted. We must both be there. When was it? Why didn't you telephone me in town?"

"Champ telephoned the doctor," said Sally. She was entirely patient with him. "And the nurse. Another one's coming in the morning. The doctor said I couldn't possibly take care of her. I wanted to, darling. Truly I wanted to."

She began to sob a little, in a restrained, miserable way, and he had compassion on her. He stopped and spoke in his old tone to her.

"Get your breath," said he quietly. "Don't mind me. It's only—the surprise."

The last word was all that came to him. Even now he could not take it in. Amy, of all people, to be living at home under ether, and in alien hands! There were things he had to know. Not even to spare Sally could he defer his need of hearing. He had to ask it brutally, to ask at all.

"Just what is it?" he said. "Where have they hurt her?"

"I don't know," said Sally quietly. That, he saw, was a part of her rehearsed evidence. "They think—her

spine. There are bandages up round her neck and chin. But not her face, father," she cried, suddenly breaking. "Not her face. She looked just the same when I saw her—only she was asleep."

Then they went on together, not speaking again, and up the path to the house. At the door, Templeton halted an instant when the sickening testimony of the ether assailed him. Elizabeth stood there in the hall. Even she, he thought, in his one glimpse at her, had changed. She was pale, and her dilated eyes were black. But her voice was low and as composed as ever.

"They'd rather you wouldn't go in, sir," she said to Templeton. "Not till she's awake. She wouldn't know you now and it would be—hard."

"No," said he. "Of course we mustn't. Sally, you run up and wash your face in cold water and get the dust off. I dragged you, didn't I? And we'll go in when they tell us to."

Sally went upstairs obediently and Elizabeth returned to her kitchen. Templeton waited until he heard the closing of doors behind them and then ran softly upstairs, to his own room, his and Amy's, where the windows were open and the breath of ether reigned. There was Amy in her bed, muffled to the chin, her face smaller yet, inside its bandages. A uniformed nurse sat by the window at a little distance from her, a slight, masterful person who rose and came softly forward with a professional smile, and yet, he noted, the air of defending her charge against him. She motioned him to go out, and he understood he was to ask his questions—for questions she would understand to

be inevitable—in the hall outside. But he shook his head at her. Probably he smiled, in apologetic assurance of his ability to take her point of view. At any rate, she, like the rest of his daily world, saw he was to be humored, so far as professional rites would allow. To her, at once, he was Dear Old Templeton. And she was relieved to find he had nothing to ask. He merely stepped in and sat down in Amy's chair by the bedside, the chair where she used to sit before her dressing table, to tie her long braids, and there he sat, not staring at her, having once mentally estimated the distance between them and finding it was small enough for him to touch her hand when she awoke. It was inhuman, he believed, to be allowed to return after that strange excursion called anaesthesia and not find a warm hand ready to guide you home. The nurse, with an immediate and entire confidence in him, again took her seat by the window, getting up from time to time for little enquiring administrations at the bedside; and so they waited on Amy's coming back.

XXIX

He stayed until she woke; but his vigil had been useless. She did not need him. He touched her hand, but she did not seem to know, and he understood she had to struggle alone out of the borders of her captivity. Only the nurse could help her. That well equipped person nodded at him to indicate at once her own competence and his uselessness which had, the glance said, been proven to him in a way he could understand. She had allowed him to see for himself. Now he'd better go. So he slipped out as quietly as he had come, and below found Sally and Elizabeth, and food ready to be brought in to the table that had been kept waiting. Sally was pale and composed, but Elizabeth still moved with her air of being under stress and carrying it emotionally. They were as unlike as possible, but he really saw only Sally who put her hand through his arm and went in to supper with him. Elizabeth served him, and he found he was very hungry.

"Aren't you going to eat?" he asked Sally, who did not take her usual place but sat down beside him near enough to do little foolish things about arranging his food, pushing his glass nearer, and tempting him in quiet ways.

"I had something," she said. "It's late, dear. You must go to bed."

Was it late? He found he was surprised to see the night had formed outside, and to hear the little noises belonging to the night alone.

"I think I'll go up and see how things are getting on," he said presently. "You go to bed, child. I'll call you if—" there he stopped.

If Amy needed her? No, he knew Amy would need neither of them with that uniformed capability to guide her out of the fog. Her body would not summon them. It was better off without their ministrations. But her soul—that must be waiting to worry back into its abused dwelling, and surely it must find him ready to comfort it. Not Sally: he hoped to save her the shock and strain. But Sally was outstripping him.

"I'll run up now, said she, "while you have your pipe."

She went, before he had time to hinder her, and he found such lassitude on him that, although he pushed his chair back from the table, he had no impulse to leave it. Elizabeth came in softly and cleared away, but he did not look at her. She only existed as a part of the old life that had been swept along before the rush of hostile forces. And she, knowing he did not see her and perhaps might not even answer if he spoke, let herself think worshipfully of him. At last she felt herself on the great tide that sweeps men and women to some end the Maker of the universe only knows. She was passionately grieved and passionately happy, lost with him in the stupor of his grief and wildly alive in her own devotion and her thankfulness that, unknown to him, almost unseen in his abstraction, she

could fill his cup and plate. She was doing what no one else could do so whole-heartedly at that moment. She was his servant, and she exulted in it.

Sally came back shortly, and put her hand on his shoulder.

"I'd go to bed, dear," she said. "She's asleep."

He roused himself and went with her into the library.

"Is it all right?" he asked her. "Does *she* say it's all right? It's real sleep, I mean?"

"It's morphia," said Sally. "She'll have it through the night. She'd be—in pain, you know. They're not going to let her. It's what they always do."

Sitting there in the library, Amy's everlasting papers still littering the table, he wondered dumbly at the capable tone. It was maternal. She was only Sally, and yet how did she know what "they" always did? Amy's papers! he found his eyes dwelling on them, and, though they gave him a sickness of misery, not able to turn away. His mind slipped off to the eternal wonder of the fleetingness of mortal flesh and the tough permanence of things. Without knowing he was doing it, he quoted Rossetti absently:

> "Less than her shadow on the grass,
> Or than her image in the stream."

Sally knew what he meant. Her eyes had followed his to the littering pile. The papers that were the occupation of Amy's hands could be preserved, if one took the pains, for years upon years, but the frail heart of flesh might stop beating—when? She found herself speaking wildly, as she had not spoken or allowed herself to think.

"You mustn't, father. Don't let it get inside you. Let's be like her—the nurse—and do the things, but not think about them." She felt herself impelled to add immemorial words—"So, it will make us mad" —but dismissed them because they also were a part of what they must not do.

"No," he said, bringing himself back to her with a start, "there will be plenty of time for that—afterwards."

That, too, she understood. Grief—there would be plenty of time for grief.

"Who"—he was not curious about the manner of the ill that had been done to Amy, but it seemed decent, in a dreary way, to know. "Who told you?" he asked. "Who found her, did you say?"

A warmer life ran into Sally's face.

"Champ," she said, and he noted the thrill in her voice and was glad something about it all could move her beautifully. "He brought her home. He carried her upstairs. He did everything."

"Do you know—" there he stopped. Did she know who had done it? But at this stage he did not care. It was a deferred duty to know, and he could wait for that blank misery for which there was plenty of time.

And Champ, too, was shirking the memory of that afternoon. He had been in his old lounging place in the Calvert woods. That was immediately after luncheon, and he had gone there with the sense of greed over fair weather which is likely to stir the mind in spring. One of his lonesome fits was upon him, and he neither wanted Sally nor anybody else. He had these feelings of wood loneliness and yielded to them

because he had a notion they brought on the poetical mood where you can pluck down verses from the sky. He thought passionately of poetry, and would have drugged himself to enter more deeply into the mystery, though the only drug that served him was that other mystery of the world outside houses and the sound of man's voice, or a deep plunge into books of verse where he forgot himself and fell into a willing ecstasy. But the day was marked with disaster. He had not been in the woods half an hour when he heard the crackling of twigs and knew, also by that warning sense within, that some one was coming. He guessed at once. It was Irene, doubtless bearing the clashing cymbals of her wilful emotion, and she could spoil the woods for him. He had been lying at length, and he rose unwillingly. But he would not look at her until she was a step away. She was in high spirits.

"What a face!" she mocked him. "Poor old boy! did he want to be alone and wouldn't they let him? they would come sneaking round to say howdy! Oh, come, Champ! wake up. You can write your poetry any old time, but you won't always find a girl that has poked off into the woods to find you—and be snubbed for her pains."

He did look at her then, and was appropriately ashamed. Why the deuce couldn't he at least be civil?

"Hullo!" said he grudgingly. "Got your car out there?"

Yes, she told him, she had. Come on and they'd go up over Lone Tree Hill and bring up somewhere or other for tea. Champ had not taken her into his mind at all, except as something buzzing about him,

stinging perhaps and making holes in the fabric of his afternoon. He was thinking how queer it was that he had only two moods toward her nowadays: an angry pity when she cried and an insensate lack of obligation to be civil to her. Why couldn't he force himself to be half-way decent? The only reason he could see was that she had, by her own act, renounced all right to the ordinary courtesies; she was playing a part. But her tears were ready for him or, he angrily told himself, they shortly would be.

"Champ!" she said imploringly, and though he was tempted to march off down the wood path, he forced himself to return the tardy civility:

"I beg your pardon?"

The courtesy was too elaborate and she repudiated it sharply:

"Don't! You needn't be civil to me. That's what you are, Champ. You're civil, damned civil, and I won't have it. It's an insult when you remember—things."

What things? he asked himself angrily and to an empty purpose: for he knew. There had been some cheap, idle commerce, the semblance of affection where none was: only the abandon of promiscuous youth. He did not answer, and she stood looking at him, her eyes darkened, her mouth quivering upon words that would not come. He had seen her moved beyond her power of self-control, but never so much as this, and the other side of his nature, the one that saw distress and pitied it, overbore his irritation, and he was sorry for her.

"Irene," he said, "don't! We mustn't go on like this

We could have a decent enough time together—sometimes—if we could only be reasonable."

"Reasonable!" she repeated. "Is that what you think we can be after——"

She paused, and he, too, paused on the brink of compassion for her. She had betrayed herself. This was not grief in her voice: it was anger. She surprised him, but no more than herself. She had struggled for words, and they refused to answer. They, too, were her enemies. What was the thing to do? She did not know, and impulsively she did as she could, made a quick forward movement, and struck him in the face. One of her rings had slipped and the stone hurt him, though it did not cut the skin. Her motion was so sudden that he winced back from it, and found he was thinking he didn't remember she wore rings. But if the effect on him was apparently neutral, on her it was overwhelming. She stood silent, her eyes on his reddened cheek, and then, in a tumult of hysteria, threw herself upon him, her arms about his neck, and sobbed through flooding tears. They, at least, were genuine and they touched the spring of pity in him.

"I didn't! I didn't!" she kept assuring him. "Oh, I didn't mean it! Tell me you know I didn't mean it."

He put his hands on her arms and freed himself. There he held her, and they stood face to face, she shuddering and he wishing to God she'd leave the matter where it was. It was the worst thing that had happened between them, and he could not feel he had paid too much for it, if it made an end. She, too,

would feel it and she would go. But she was not at the climax of her remorseful passion. What could she do? she asked him. Should she swear never to see him again? Should she kill herself? There his strained patience gave way, and he bade her not to be a fool, temperately, he thought, almost humorously. Why, if he loved a woman and bade her not to be a fool, he could imagine her smiling up at him, understanding it was only love-making by inversion. And though he was far from wishing to fall into any sort of love game with Irene, he did think she might smile with him over his roughness. "Match and saltpetre" it was, no matter for smiling, but another insult, and she wrenched her arms free and ran back along the path she had come. She did not move lightly, with her usual considered grace, but, he noted, blunderingly, stumbling once or twice, and once when her shoulder hit a tree, striking out at it wildly as if it too were a tormenting enemy. It made him uncomfortable, because it came to him, as he watched her, that she ran as if she could not see. That must be her tears. Once he called to her, not that he wanted her back, but because it seemed inhuman to let her go. She was the last person one could imagine as being healed by the silence of withdrawal. The only medicine for her was the passionate reassurance he could not give.

So he took his own way out of the woods and went home disgusted with the afternoon and his own helplessness. Just as he was about to take the short cut he glanced over at Red House and saw Sally walking back and forth on the roadside. He stopped and looked

at her. She was pacing and turning, but when she headed his way, she would halt and look along the road as if expecting some one. So he turned back into the highway and went on to her, where she stood still awaiting him. As he was coming up to her, he told himself she looked—how? Different,—that was the only way to put it. She was dressed in her favorite dull blue, and he thought if there were a really blue lilac that would be Sally, she seemed to fit so mistily into a bright landscape. But her face was sharply interrogative. She might have seen a threatening fate coming along that way. As he neared her, she smiled and hailed him, in relief he thought, but whimsically, as if about to induct him into her childish mysteries.

"It isn't you anyway," said Sally. "That's one thing."

"What isn't me?" asked Champ.

"Something has happened to somebody. I feel it in my bones."

"Your poor old bones?" said he. "Rheumatiz, that's all's the matter with you. You're not half so spooky as you think you are."

"No?" said Sally. "Not 'arf? Well, I'll go in then, and wait for a wire or something. But I wish father'd come home—mother, too. She's in town."

He walked to the door with her, and, as she did not ask him in, thought it best, in view of her mood, not to press his way. In the brighter sunlight near the steps she looked at him and saw his face more plainly.

"But perhaps it is you?" she said. "Nothing's hap-

pened to you? not an accident? Your face, Champ. You've hurt your face."

Well, something had happened, but nothing he had the faintest wish to remember, least of all to tell. A row, that was what it was, a row as genuine as those encounters when a coster's "jumpin' on 'is mother." A woman had struck him in the face. What business had he in a vulgar scrap, provoking it and then mentally scarred?

"Nothing," said he. "I've been in the woods and they're queer to-day."

He left her without ceremony, and went off home where he found the house pleasantly still. Old Stephen had gone off in a car, and the servants, according to their degree of ingenuity, were somehow amusing themselves. The telephone bell rang, and he answered it. A woman's voice came, thin and high, almost incoherent and choked by haste.

"Your woods. Hurry! The road in front of your woods, the west entrance. She's had an accident. In the road."

He put a question, but got no answer. She had hung up. Then he knew, or thought he knew. It was Irene. Somehow the idiot had done for herself—but, poor child! poor child! He ran down stairs and out to the garage, full of angry fear for her, and also angered against her, because it was so certainly a bluff. Still, he could not disregard the choking call, got out a car and drove up the road. At the entrance to the woods, he slackened. It was true. There was a woman's figure, half-way down the slope opposite the entrance, cast there, or having cast itself. Poor

child! poor child! He left the car and jumped over the bank to her. It was not Irene; it was Amy Templeton, and Sally's omen was justified.

The rest of it followed as Sally had told her father. Champ had lifted Amy into the car and driven home with her, left her in the car, at a little distance from the house, and run on to tell Sally. He found her quietness itself. She knew it all, he thought afterward, when he had carried Amy in, done the necessary telephoning and stayed until the doctor came. Then, since Sally in her ordered mental calm, did not seem to need him, he went home again, and found the house, not blessedly solitary, but miserably possessed. Some one was there. No one told him, but he knew, and going into the library, he found her,—Irene, a small frightened wisp, curled up on the end of a wide couch. Whether it was the real Irene at last he did not know, but it was tragedy. She had even drawn her feet up and sat hunched into herself, her white face and staring eyes the one significance in a clot of misery. Her lips moved, but she could only whisper, and he went closer and drew up a chair. It seemed inhuman to stand over her and put her through her third degree, though he was conscious that this was what any natural question might seem to her. He tried to take her hand, but she drew it back.

"Lock the door," she said.

She said it over and over until, though he had begun by telling her his father was away and they were quite alone, he did get up and locked it, and then came back to her. Afterward he could not remember how her confession came out, whether he questioned her or she

dragged it forth, pulled it up, drop by drop, out of its slimy well. But he never did really want to clarify the memory of it. Enough that it could happen. At first, it seemed to be all about herself. She had got into her car, when she had left him and turned into the woods. She didn't know anything. She couldn't see straight. She only knew he hated her and she'd got to die. He would be there in the woods where she left him. He'd see her speeding and realise what would happen. No, she didn't mind the turns in the road nor the trees, only it seemed the trees hated her, too, and the sooner she got away from them the better. Cross the road in high—that's what she meant to do, and over the bank—and then he'd see. But just as she was coming out into the road, she saw the bank and it looked so steep—and she didn't want to die—under the machine, too—and she turned, how she didn't know—on one wheel, she guessed—couldn't have done it to save her soul any other time. And then—and then—there was a woman walking—she hadn't seen her before—and she hit her, she hit the woman and the woman rolled down the bank where she'd meant to go herself and she drove on and stopped at that little tea house and telephoned him. Did he find her? "The woman, Champ, the woman! O God! did you find the woman?" He was holding her hands now, and trying to meet her wild eyes calmly.

Yes, he told her, he found the woman. He had taken her to the Templetons' and there was a doctor with her now. At that, her terror grew.

"It wasn't!" she babbled. "Not that girl you like, not the girl?"

He had not meant to tell her anything except some palliating trifle that might soothe her, for if, in her wildness, she had murdered Amy, she was only a fool, irresponsible to the last degree, and he would have to quiet her and get her home; but he found himself saying sternly:

"It was her mother."

She looked at him a blank minute, as if this were the crowning blow, and then fell to crying loudly, and in the midst of it Champ heard his father at the door. He was calling Ormond testily:

"Come here and see what's the matter with this damned latch."

On this Champ left her, in silence now, for she had heard the voice and seemed shaken by it. He went to the door, unlocked it, stepped out and shut it again under his father's astonished eyes.

"That's all, Ormond," he said, and, while Ormond discreetly vanished, Champ told his father what he could.

"Irene Renfrew's in there. She's been in a motor accident. No, not hurt. No, nor smashed her car. No, nobody's run into her. She's gone to pieces, that's the amount of it. She'll be all right in a minute. Yes, leave her to get hold of herself."

"Why don't you telephone her mother?" Old Stephen wanted to know.

Even at the moment Champ had a grim memory of the numberless times Old Stephen had wanted to telephone Irene's mother. Mothers meant something, in his day. He couldn't get it really into his mind that they didn't now.

"She'll be all right," Champ assured him. "Give her a minute or two and I'll take her home."

Old Stephen turned away with the acquiescence of the superseded generation. The old were no longer for counsel, his mind muttered to itself. They had to yield. But a mother, he should think, certainly a mother—there his mind left it. These new ways were not for him.

XXX

Champ went back to her. She was no longer crying, but her face was sodden with tears. Her eyes met his in a miserable acquiescence. They dwelt upon him with a fixity that seemed, to his irritated consciousness, to say he was responsible for her. He was her only friend. He assumed the false cheerfulness which is the common response to a trouble when no remedy is apparent.

"Father's come home," he informed her. He sat down by her and laid a hand upon hers. "I told him you'd been in an accident, and he wanted me to telephone your mother. But there's no need of that. Pull yourself together. Wipe off your face. Don't you want to go upstairs and powder yourself up? Then I'll take you home."

She turned on him a glance full of bitterness. How could he, it seemed to ask, send her away from him, suffering as she was? But she said nothing, and he tried again.

"Come on, Irene. Get yourself into shape. You've had a devil of a shock, but you're best off at home. Don't you know you are? I'll take you over in your car and Ormond can come along with mine. Besides, there'll be talk about this thing. You'd better be out of it."

At that, she seemed to uncoil herself from the knot her body had assumed, as if it meant to look as small

as possible, invisible, if it could. She put her feet on the floor, but, still sitting, leaned forward until her head was on his shoulder. Then she began to cry again, but in a weak, dispirited way, as if she lacked strength even for that.

"No, no, no," she kept saying. And then: "I can't go home."

His mind was not with her. It was with Amy, as he had carried her to Red House in her piteous ruin, and with Sally who received them, knowing they were coming and as piteously calm. There was nothing he could do for them now, but he felt himself drawn inevitably toward them. They did not need him, but he needed to be there. He sat supporting Irene on his shoulder, stroked her hair absently, and let his mind go free. She could, he thought, be persuaded presently, when she was calm. She had stopped crying and began whispering to him:

"Champ, you've got to help me. Nobody can help me but you."

Yes, he said, still absently, he'd help her. He'd do all he could. But first he must take her home.

"I can't go home," she repeated, not now in a whisper but the stubborn voice he knew. "Don't you see, Champ, they'll find me? That's the first place they'll go to. They'll arrest me. If she dies, I don't know what they'd do."

He withdrew from her and put her back, so that her head rested against the wall behind her. The picture of it all rose before him, the wanton deed done from no motive but the vainest impulse. Irene was not guilty in intention, but she had done the deed.

"They don't want to arrest you," he said presently. "They're not thinking about you. Or me either," he added, with a slight bitterness which did not escape her.

It seemed to him that somehow he himself might be guilty. Irene was curiously identified with him, either his by his own acquiescing folly or through her wayward will, and he was morally accessory to the deed she did. If he had treated her differently in the woods—with kindness, could you say, or merely with the authority of the stronger?—her mad ebullition might not have occurred.

She was going on again, reaching out her small hands to him as if she dared not leave the spot where he had placed her, but was piteously seeking to lessen the distance between them.

"Champ, you don't understand. I'm in danger. It's of no use for you to say I'm not, for I am. This is the only place where they never'd look for me."

"Why, no, it isn't," said he, trying to be reasonable. "It's the first place they'd look. You're always coming here, don't you know you are? The servants know it anyway, and there's your car."

Curiously, this threw her disorganised mind off at another angle, and she began lamenting, this time over past grievances he seemed to have revived.

"Always coming here! That's what you'd say, is it? Why, I never come here, never in the world except when you've been a brute to me, and then I have to see you."

"Well, never mind, child," said he, with futility. "The point is, you can't stay now. Father's come home

and I've told him you've had an accident. He thinks you're too shaken up to see him; but the first thing he wanted was to telephone your mother you're safe and were coming home. And you've simply got to go. I'll go with you and tell her what I told him. Now run upstairs and look yourself over in the glass. Why, you're a sight!"

But there was no sense in rallying her. She felt no resentment. Indeed, she scarcely heard.

"Where shall I go?" she asked.

"The room at the head of the stairs. I'll take a look at the car."

He watched her up the stairs and heard her go into the room. Then he went off at a run, not to the car, as he had intended, but over to Red House where he went round to the kitchen door, to find Elizabeth. She was not there. The homely peace of a kitchen at twilight halted him for an instant, and he looked about him. Strange that the setting of life could be so tranquil when life itself was in ruins! He stole into the hall and listened, but there was not a sound, into the library and found no one. They were all busy working about Amy, in their several ways, and he had to leave them to it. But when he had gone back home, he realised that he had been with Irene an hour and Templeton must have come home. Sally had her father.

In the hall sat Old Stephen, as if he had been waiting for him. There was an odd guilty look about him. He withdrew into the library, after a nod of the head suggesting that Champ should follow him.

"It's all up with us, boy," said he. His guilt

had merged into a rueful humor. "She's going to stay."

"Stay? Irene?" said Champ. "Did you ask her to?"

"No, no, you bet I didn't. Good God! I don't want her to stay. But she's shaken up, shocked, she says, and she don't dare to see her mother till she's better. So she had me telephone the old lady, and now she's upstairs and her dinner's to be sent up to her and she's going to spend the night."

"But who told her she was going to have her dinner sent up to her?" Champ enquired, and his father quailed. He hated to feel a fool under the eyes of youth.

"Why, I did," said he guiltily. "I guess I did. I offered to send over for her nightie and things, and she said that wasn't necessary, and could she see one of the maids, and she was too shaken to come down. Would I send a tray? What in the devil's name could I do?" he enquired testily. "What's a man going to do when a woman's in his own house and asks him to send up a tray?"

"Send it up," said Champ drily. "I'll have the car fed and watered and put up for the night. I suppose the car'll be demanding a tray, next."

He turned away, but Old Stephen halted him by an exasperated call.

"Champ! you come back here." His son came. "It's no use for you to be sarcastic and all that sort of thing to me, for I won't have it. This ain't my hunt. It's yours. The girl's yours."

"Oh, is she, father?" enquired Champ, rather wearily. "This is the first time I've heard you stand for it."

"I don't stand for it," cried Old Stephen. "I hate it like p'ison. But you brought her round here, that's what I mean. Some way or another you've toled her on, till now she's settled on us, and I believe this time next year'll see her upstairs in that room, same as she is now. And you'll marry her, Champ, you'll marry her."

"Yes," said Champ, still in his tired voice. "I shall marry her."

Old Stephen's heart melted toward his darling, melted so suddenly that he ran after Champ who was now out at the front door on his way to the car.

"No, you didn't, Champ," he lamented. "You never toled her on, never in the world. But that won't make any difference to her. She's here, and here to stay."

"Yes," said Champ. "I guess that's the amount of it. She's here to stay. Don't you mind, father," he added kindly. "You're all right. And it's a small thing, after all, this is. You send up the tray."

Was it a small thing, he wondered, this madness of a girl's nature, forever stirred into hideous outcry by the weakness of his own? He did not love her. He had never loved her, and it had seemed to him, in these last months, that she did not, even after her kind, love him. But, as it also seemed to him, she had staked all the febrile powers of her nature upon him. He was the test by which her self-love stood or fell. She had skimmed the surface of life, not as her eyes saw it but as books described it to her. Neither beautiful nor in any sense gifted, she had learned that life was a riot

of expression, of vibrating waves, a noise that is not harmony, an energy banging on to unseen ends. To subjugate him was to vindicate herself, to prove her right to a place in the turbulent procession of her kind. Yet, thinking of her up there in her disordered plumage, he was sorry for her. She was a part of life, yet not of it, any more than a malignant growth is a true part of the body. Was she in some way his? Did her horrible insistence upon her sexual right to him indicate some law in nature to which he, if he were stronger, might also sacrifice and bring them both out on that plane where the dark gods had resolved they both should be? And was it the gods, or were the gods themselves devils who kill us for their sport? And if they could hurl her out, like a missile, to destroy Amy, at the cost of pain unthinkable, what could that mean? a grimace at him, a leering whisper that he need not have had it so if he had been more human, and not have driven her mad? And that reminded him of a further deed he had to do for Red House. He must tell his father about Amy, so that if he saw any of the Templetons, he would know how to meet them. He went in, and did it briefly. Mrs. Templeton had had an accident, hit by a car—a car that went on—he had found her, and everything was done that could be. But nothing must be said about it. She was a well known woman and it was just as well for her not to get into the papers. It never did you any good, that sort of thing, professionally.

Old Stephen stared, big-eyed. He almost wept, and Champ came on him, half an hour after, when he had

gone over again and found Templeton was really there, walking up and down the hall, his hands clenched, muttering to himself: "Sally! That little Sally!" And, as Champ took pains to assure himself, the tray had been sent up.

Sally was the calmest of them all, as calm as the two nurses who seemed to possess Amy between them, passing her deftly, the one to the other, as night came or morning and their own hours began. Templeton would stand in the doorway and look at her, and Sally would slip in for a half hour in the big chair by the bedside. For two days Amy lay stupefied, and, when she did wake, Templeton was there, providentially, he thought, in a deep inward excitement, and then wondered if it were providential because, although her eyes rested on him for a moment, it was not as if she knew him or had needed him. There were warning glances at him from the other side of the bed where the nurse stood waiting for him to go. And he did go, conscious of his own futility, and the nurse had set the chair back and was giving Amy something from a tube. Once Amy moaned a little, and he saw her thin white arm stripped again for the hypodermic. He went downstairs, the tears hot in his eyes, and met Elizabeth at the foot. She seemed to be waiting for him; but in reality she was passing through, and, seeing his face, it halted her as promptly as if he had called. Templeton did not notice her, except as one of the objects he must walk round to get any proper solitude for himself where he could swear or cry, as his inner self seemed to be commanding. But Elizabeth stood in the way, and, surprisingly to her also, she spoke:

"Don't look like that. Don't feel so. She'll get well. I'd give my life for her."

He glanced up with heavy eyes and smiled a little, to show his thanks. But she went back into the kitchen, as noiselessly as if she wanted to efface herself even from his memory and he turned into the library where Sally had been waiting since she heard him coming down the stairs. What was that new look in Sally's face? It was flushed and the eyes were bright. It looked, he thought, almost angry, and there had been no room for anger in this house since Amy had lain there silent—only grief.

"What is it?" said he.

She shook her head and seemed to shake off her disturbance also.

"I've been hoping you'd come down," she said. "Pat's telephoned he'd got my letter, and he's coming on this next train."

But she did not tell him she had been standing in the doorway where she got the light on Elizabeth's passionate face and heard her voice, nor that a sudden responsive anger was prompting her to cry:

"Don't look at my father like that. What business have you to look at my father? He belongs to her upstairs."

She drew forward a chair, and he sank into it heavily.

"I didn't know," said he, "Elizabeth felt like that. Did you? You heard her, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Sally quietly, "I heard her."

She pulled up a chair for herself, and they sat by the fireless hearth although it was springtime and the sun was warm.

"I didn't know she was so devoted to your mother. Did you know it?"

"No, not really, I think."

"Well," said Templeton, "God bless her for it anyway."

"Yes," said Sally heavily, "God bless her. All of us. We need it bad enough."

Then they heard a step coming up the walk and nothing more was said about Elizabeth and her love for Amy, nor was ever said. But Sally could not lull herself into thinking she liked Elizabeth.

Pat came in, looking very spruce for him. With better fortune, he had, Templeton told him this spring, put on wedding garments. And, indeed, the former man seemed to have passed away. Pat could slip his skin as completely as a snake when the season called for it, and now he had been playing prosperity because money breeds money and prices mount, the less you need them. He said very little as he came in but was appropriately grave, and they were thankful to him that he did not ask explicitly how Amy was.

"I didn't hear a whisper of it," he said, "not till this noon. I was going to telephone to see if I might bring a young woman out after lectures. She wanted me, but I told her I should be going back, and I proposed Amy."

Sally had risen and gone upstairs on one of her enquiring visits to her mother and Pat sat down in her chair and looked at Templeton gravely.

"Well, old man," said he, "you won't go abroad I take it."

"No," said Templeton, rousing himself to the sur-

prising thought of it. He had practically forgotten any such possibility. "I suppose I'd better give up my passage. I hadn't thought of that."

"I'll take it over," said Pat. "I ought to be going back about now."

If there was any wish on Templeton's part to keep his brother near him at this time, he refused to recognise it. After all, perhaps he didn't really feel it. Pat was smooth as silk in daily life, but was he fitted to this desolate, austerely ordered house? Perhaps not.

"You see," Pat was saying, as he regarded his neat silken ankle, actually with some surprise that an ankle belonging to him could put on so correct a surface, "I've got to arrange with an English agent. I might do it from here, of course, but those things are better pulled off in person. You know, Jack, I've sold it. I've sold my play."

Templeton roused himself to drag up a tardy interest.

"I didn't know," he said. "Is it a play? Is that what you've been at?"

"Yes," Pat told him, with an obliging readiness to let him in. "You'll recognise it when I tell you. Don't you know that plot we talked over, about the plutocrats that wanted to return to nature, live the simple life and all that, and how they went round in a circle and came back to the loaves and fishes again?"

Templeton awoke. He forgot his heavy eyes, forgot the strange sharp outlines grief had been drawing about the commonest objects of his life, forgot Amy.

He spoke with a sudden harshness that seemed for an instant like a warning.

"What?" said he. "You don't mean my play?"

Pat laughed, without embarrassment and without guile.

"Well," he said, "your play—yes. The modern version. Bless your old Victorian heart! they wouldn't have looked at it, the way you'd do it, but now I've made it viable. I modernised it to the last degree, and got some pep into it. They jumped at it. You'll see how they lap it up."

"My play!" Templeton repeated.

He had known Pat for a lifetime, but he was incredulous. Pat had done other things not, to his mind, agreeing with the more scrupulous ethics of his profession, but there had been a piquant side to them. He did his tricks gaily, as if they were no more than tricks. The satirist business still irritated Templeton extremely, but also it amused him, in an ironic way. You could call it a literary joke, if you had the heart, this selling old lamps for new, bringing out goods from dusty shelves and whipping up a market for them, as he understood the knowing had done for Victorian furniture. But this concerned a dearer thing. It had been the most precious possession of his later life—after Sally—a growth, a fruitage, something his whole life had been forming in him. It in a measure justified his living. He had recalled the saying of a brilliant French woman. She regretted she had no children. No, she did not like children especially. She did not need them to nurture her last years. "But," she said, with her shrug and lifted eyebrow, "we must pay tribute

before we go." His little play—play it might have been or fiction—was his tribute. No one might find solace in it for these difficult years; but at least he would have written it and, like the flowers of inaccessible valleys, it would have been due fruitage in answer to the sun and rain.

He said nothing whatever: only his starved heart seemed to be crying within him, until the familiar feel of sorrow suddenly reminded him that it was not for this he must weep the tears of the mind. It was for Amy. His pulse quieted, his brain took on its ordered calm. What was the frustration of one human purpose, a selfish purpose, too, the apologetic guise the instinct for continuance takes on: to leave something behind us when we have gone hence? The roadside weed is trampled before it flowers, the tree is cut down in its fulness of years. Nothing lasts. Why should he demand a permanence that is given least of all to the children of men? What does last is the invisible, the love that is the incense of life, the smoke of sacrifice, and that only flies upward like the vapor of man's breath and, to man's eyes, at least, disappears. Perhaps it reaches that unattainable erection of human imagination known as the throne of God—but to what end? To please God, to buy his favor? Such matters were too deep for him. He did not know. This was not ordered thought. It was only feeling, over in a moment and amounting to a recognition that he had to be busy now with other things than the commemorative tablet of his life's testimony. For there was Amy upstairs. But here, he roused himself to remember, was Pat, waiting for him to say something,

and pleasantly unaware that it could be in any degree hostile. Templeton began to laugh. He laughed louder and louder, and Pat, looking at him with a puzzled smile, had begun: "What the devil!" when Sally appeared in the doorway, and gave them a startled glance. She went to her father, put a hand on his shoulder and said to Pat, in a low, indignant voice:

"What have you been saying to him?"

Even to Pat, the situation began to seem a little unwieldy.

"Upon my word," he began, but Templeton forestalled him. He put his hand up and laid it on Sally's.

"It's nothing, dear, nothing," he answered. "It's of no consequence. That's what we're taught to say, aren't we, when somebody trips us up? 'Never mind! it's of no consequence.' "

XXXI

When Elizabeth had pledged herself to Templeton in his trouble, other eyes than Sally's were on her. Eunice had opened the kitchen door and stood jealously listening. But when Elizabeth went back into the kitchen, her mother was busy at the table, and nothing was said except for a brief question and answer about the work before them. After the house was in order for the night, Elizabeth sat down by the window to be on call if she were needed upstairs. She had stayed three nights now, and her mother had gone home. Eunice hesitated. She walked into the entry, took her hat from its nail, and then stood thinking. Her face fell into a perplexity pitifully sad. She had been wondering whether she might give up meeting Blaisdell for that night. Would he hang about until the last minute, waiting for her, and then go away in the haste of irritation she had lately found in him? She sometimes doubted whether what she called their friendship would last. He was quick to small angers now, not as if she tried him, but, as he told her, because he was "up against it," in some way he did not explain.

But Enoch did explain, so innocently that she could not suspect him of a hidden purpose. He had come back from the village and was unloading his packages of supplies on the kitchen table. She came out to put them away, and he began, as if he spoke absently, in his colorless voice:

"That Plaisdell woman's been carryin' on at a great rate, so they tell me. Wants to leave Jim, an' does leave him, too. Packs up an' cuts off som'er's an' works a spell some place, an' then comes home an' cooks him up an' goes again. Don't seem to think he's treated her right, folks don't some way or another. But then she don't treat him right, neither. There's another man she goes battin' round with. Married man, too. But there! he's got a car."

It filled her with a sharp alarm, and when she saw Big Jim she had, in her doubtful way with him, tried to ask him if it were true. He had frowned in silence, and she made her own agonised resolve. If she had been the cause of his wife's forsaking him, she must not see him any more. On the other hand, if the wife knew nothing about her and went away from indifference to him, then how much he needed somebody to understand and do for him! And she could not know. He would never tell her; and she began to chew upon the bitter cud of knowledge that a man may repudiate his own fidelity, but keep a curious distaste for betraying his wife, his legal asset, to another woman. To-night she must trust to chance to make him lenient toward her. She hung up her hat again, went back into the kitchen and sat down. She would stay with Elizabeth who, seeing her settled by a window, asked her:

"Aren't you going home?"

Eunice shook her head.

"Not if you ain't," said she. "If you stay, I stay, too."

Elizabeth was touched at her tardy loyalty.

"You needn't," she said. "She's better now, you know. I expect to get some sleep. I only want to be here, in case."

Eunice fixed her with those eyes that made her face a challenge.

"I s'pose you do," she said fiercely. "Well, I want to be here, too." And then her voice trembled into the words she had used to Blaisdell, weeks ago, "He's a married man. Don't you ever think of that? a married man."

Elizabeth wanted to put her head up and ask quietly:

"Who is a married man?"

She did continue looking at her mother, but the color surged into her face.

"So you heard me," she said quietly. "You heard what I said to him."

Eunice nodded, her eyes accusatory.

"You're young," said she. "You're too young to know where such things lead. That's why I've got to be on hand. Do you s'pose I'd leave you alone in a house where he could make chances an' talk you over so's you don't know black from white? No, sure's I live, I won't."

Elizabeth sat with her hands in her lap, thinking it over. The accusation was horrible to her, but she must take it up and look at it. She began speaking, with some difficulty.

"You don't understand. He's in trouble. I would do anything in the world for him, but he no more thinks of me than if I was the dirt under his feet."

The last phrase, she thought, might carry some homely meaning to her mother's mind.

"Then if he don't," said Eunice, in a sort of bitter triumph over the cleverness of her own reasoning, "so much the worse for you when he wakes up to it an' sees you flingin' yourself at his head as you be now. Maybe he'll like it—maybe he'll laugh. Maybe—O, my soul! my soul!"

Elizabeth sat looking at her with a sternness she did not try to cover. She was angered, righteously, it seemed to her, for Templeton, for herself. She had become her mother's guardian in the debasing intrigue Eunice had spun about herself, and now she was pushed into the same shameful circumstance and Eunice was guarding her. She had not only sacrificed her own moral perfection, and was evilly thought of, but the man who was worlds away from her had been smeared with the same brush. Her devotion to the house in its trouble had become further proof of her unworthiness, and she rose and said coldly:

"You can go home, for all me. I'm going myself. I guess I can't do any good here, if I'm as bad as you say."

She went into the entry and came back with her mother's hat, passed it to her with, Eunice was bitterly aware, a gesture of despising it, poor old hat of many summers! and held open the door for her to go. Eunice preceded her. There was nothing else for her to do, and her old humility before her daughter was again heavy upon her. Elizabeth had momentarily lost the authority of the superior mind; but it was only for the moment, and as they walked home together, Eunice before

her in the path, it seemed as if Elizabeth were driving her and she felt the helplessness of those who dare not revolt. When they reached the house, Elizabeth's quicker eye was the first to detect a note tucked under the screen door. She picked it up. Eunice, seeing it in her hand, gave an exclamation so full of alarm that Elizabeth, still holding the note, stood looking at her.

"You give that to me," said Eunice. "It's mine." She put out a trembling hand.

Then Elizabeth knew who must have left the note, though she never did know that it was one of a series dropped into the hollow locust tree. Eunice had failed at the tryst and Blaisdell had bicycled by the longer way to his job. Nor did Eunice ever know it was Enoch who saw it dropped into the tree and fished it out and slipped it, unread, under the screen door in the hope of Elizabeth's finding it and doing something, he hardly knew what, but something from the magic known as education, to bring her mother to her senses. For they were both, he kept assuring himself, awful nice women, only Eunice was bewitched, Lord knew how.

The two women stood close together in the little entry, Eunice breathing hard and looking Elizabeth in the face, in a piteous beseeching.

"That's mine," said she again. "You give it to me."

"There's no name on it," said Elizabeth coldly. She held the note as she had her mother's hat, as if she scorned it.

"There's never any name," said her mother, betraying herself completely. "You give it to me. It's mine."

Elizabeth, without looking at it again, passed it to her, and even then, in this moment of her small safety, Eunice felt the pang of seeing her despise it. Elizabeth stepped into the sitting-room and stood there a moment, thinking. She did not know Blaisdell's hours, nor, if the note proved to be a summons, that this would be too late to find him. But she could risk nothing. She turned back to the entry; her mother was coming in and they met at the open door. Eunice had read the note and held it crumpled in her hand. She stopped, and Elizabeth fronted her, and spoke in a low voice, though deaf Enoch was the only creature likely to be near. It had suddenly seemed as if she and her mother shared a secret so shameful that even the walls of the house were listening greedily.

"You said you were going to watch me," she told her mother, in a low, threatening tone. "You can if you want to, but I'm going to watch you. If that note makes you go out of the house this night, I'm going with you every step."

For a moment they stood looking at each other as if neither could look away. Then suddenly the mother's face convulsed, she lifted her hands slightly, perhaps in appeal to some kinder judgment, dropped them and slipped past Elizabeth. She went through the sitting-room and up the kitchen stairs, and Elizabeth heard her step in the room overhead. Evidently her own bedroom was not a refuge safe enough. For a moment Elizabeth stood there thinking, wondering if she dared run across to Red House where, on the chance of their needing her, she prayed to be. It was a strong temptation, and she was near yielding. But suddenly, as the night fell

outside, something imperative spoke to her. It seemed to be Templeton himself speaking, in the voice of his world where she so passionately longed to live worthily. This was her place. She must stay.

Something after midnight, Eunice, who had listened vainly to hear her come upstairs, stole down to the sitting-room and looked in. There lay Elizabeth on the old sofa, in the deep sleep of youth. She had taken off her dress and her shoes and stockings; her unbound hair hung over the couch-head to the floor, and a lake of moonlight covered her white feet. She stirred and Eunice stepped back a pace, in fear of being seen. Elizabeth had wakened. She sat up.

"That you?" she called.

Her mother did not answer. She stood choked by her quickened heart, and Elizabeth listened a moment and lay down again. Eunice waited until she judged it safe to move, and then stole up the stairs. But in all the hungers of her starved life and all her horror at her own illicit passion, she had never suffered as she suffered now. Elizabeth, lying in the moonlight, her white feet gleaming, seemed to be the little Elizabeth she had adored before books and manners took her child away. She stood a moment at her own bedside, half persuaded to kneel there and say the childish prayer she had taught the little girl; but it did not seem to be for her and she said, "My God! my God!" instead, not in petition but from deep loneliness.

Again, while the night was still young, Elizabeth waked, sat up and listened. It was all a wonder of moonlight and the air from the overgrown hedge of lilac was enchantingly sweet; but she was impervious

to the beauty of it all, her thoughts turned inward upon herself. Perhaps Elizabeth had never been greatly stirred by the beauty of the world. It may have moved her to a more passionate desire of life and action, but she did not greet it as an ecstasy and a bewilderment. And now the spring night, instead of bringing solace or wounding her heart the more, in its indifference to mortal pain, did not speak to her at all. And yet the world was really urging her as terribly as it urged her mother, though the disturbance flowed to other ends. It might have seemed that the great life forces felt themselves flouted at her unconsciousness and, since she would not reach for the terrible cup of beauty which was the sacrament they offered, broke the libation over her head and let the fumes of it madden her and the redness drip like blood.

XXXII

The note Eunice held crumpled in her hand until she could read it again when she had escaped Elizabeth, told her, in two lines, that Blaisdell was alone in his house.

"She has gone," he wrote, "gone for good. The key is under the stone by the door. You be there when I come."

How could she be there when he came at three o'clock in the morning, and why did he want her to be there instead of under the old walnut in the afternoon? Then she remembered he had said, at one of their last meetings, that some one had seen them there and his wife had taxed him with it, hinting that it was she herself who saw them; but this he did not know. She would be off for one of her spells of work, he told Eunice, and she supplemented this with another of Enoch's confidences. The woman would be gone long enough, he said, to earn duds to rig herself out in. Eunice had felt a reckless pride in Blaisdell's more unguarded bitterness. It proved, she thought, the depth of the wrong the woman had done him; it justified his own unfaithfulness. Then the old dull feeling of shame came again upon her, and she told him they'd better not meet at all, and he seemed to acquiesce sombrely. When it was safe again, he would let her know. Then

began the letters deposited in the hollow tree: not love letters but curt reports of the wife's comings and goings. And now she was gone for good, and he wanted Eunice and she longed to go. She had passed beyond the fevered misery of an affection as wonderful as it was strange, into anxiety for his comfort when he came back to a lonesome house every day falling into worse disorder, making his own bed and getting his meals anyhow. Like a forsaken child, he pulled upon her heart, and, while she watched Elizabeth, she felt his hands drawing her the forbidden way. The hands grew so pathetic with his need that sometimes, when she woke at night, they seemed actually the hands of a child. The thought of him was curiously mingled with that of Elizabeth, and both seemed children. Both of them needed her and neither would give her the solace of owning it. Sometimes—but this was in actual dreams—they were so mingled that Elizabeth would be standing with her under the old walnut, with warm arms about her neck and Blaisdell would be coldly forbidding her to see Elizabeth at all.

On this night when Elizabeth downstairs lay like a watch-dog to keep her prisoner, she knew there would be no sleep for her, and, when midnight struck, she could not withstand his need. She must go, not to him but to his neglected house. When he came home at three, he should find, not her, but the welcoming sight of what she had been able to do for him. Again she stole downstairs, this time in her stockinged feet, and closed the door between the kitchen and the sitting-room where Elizabeth still lay. She went into the

pantry and filled a basket with such food as she dared take without discovery: bread, butter, some cold meat and, with a sudden daring because it had been so beautifully baked, a loaf of "raisin cake." She slipped out of the side door, sat down on the steps to put on her shoes, and was away through the night, down the road to his forsaken home. If she was to return to her old depleting certainty that her love for him was wrong, she did not feel it now. The haste of her decision had quickened her blood to the pure pleasure of it and, right or wrong, she was having the worth of her adventure. Not hampered like Elizabeth by the rigor of the intellectual life, she felt the beauty of the night and could have called to it, as she fled along, perhaps thanked it for its kindness in being with her. For it was with her. The night understood and had no denials.

Before she had done thinking about the night, she was at Blaisdell's house. She opened the gate, without precaution, and went quickly up the path. Her hand was at once on the stone, and she had taken out the key and fitted it in the lock. The adventure with the night itself had quickened her dull mind, and a thought ran into it that he might have been mistaken in saying his wife had gone for good. She might be asleep upstairs. But that made no difference. She herself had a right to be there. She closed the door behind her as she had the gate, with no attempt at silence, and went through the sitting-room into the kitchen. She had never been in the house before, but she knew the lamp must be on the mantel over the

stove and the matches with it. In a moment she had a light, and, looking about her in sorrow yet in triumph, she told herself it was just as she knew it would be: the confusion she had dreaded for him, and every proof that she was needed to set it right. For two hours she moved about like a wind sent to winnow order from disarray. She swept and dusted and, when the lower floor was done, went, with more hesitancy, up the stairs to the chamber where he and his wife had slept. In the front room at the east, the bed was unmade and near the closet door lay a pair of women's shoes, high-heeled shoes such as Eunice had never worn in her life and hateful to her in what seemed their implication of slothful ease. She had brought up the broom with her and, in a sudden impulse of mingled righteousness and jealous fury, she swept the shoes into the closet and shut the door upon them. After that, she felt more at home in the room and went vigorously at the task of setting it in order. She swept and dusted and made the bed and then stood looking about her, thankful that she had dared to come. This at least had not been wrong.

But as she was about to take up her lamp and go downstairs, she halted for a moment, the blood in her face and her heart clamoring. There was one thing, but one, her heart had whispered, she might have. Nobody would know it, least of all Elizabeth. She moved over to the bed, stealthily, as if in the lonely house, not visible, but guarding all its memories, some one would hear, and laid her cheek for a moment on the pillow his cheek might touch. When she lifted her head she was about to smooth out the little hollow she

had made, but instead, again her daring heart prompting her, she returned to it, bent over and left a kiss on it. Then she took up the lamp and went downstairs again as if memory—not the old memories that had been living in the room, but a memory she had herself made—were pursuing her.

She set her eatables on the kitchen table, put out the light, locked the door behind her and went home.

That flying progress was not so exciting as the first. The night was waning, and it seemed to say it could not help her. Perhaps it had its own soberer destiny to consider, so soon to leave the world to dawn. At any rate, it did not take hands and run with her, and also she herself was tired. But she got home with all due speed and, in unbroken luck, upstairs again without waking Elizabeth. She took off her clothes, throwing them anywhere in her haste—as shif'less, she thought, with a small smile, as the owner of the high-heeled shoes—and got into bed where she slept deeply until five, when she woke to find Elizabeth standing by her. Elizabeth was fresh as the morning, after her bath, cold from the well, and Eunice, looking up at her with dazed eyes from which the wildness of the night had gone, wondered how she could look so, "sleeping in her clothes."

"Are you all right?" Elizabeth asked kindly, though without anxiety, her mother jealously felt.

Yes, Eunice said, she was all right. She guessed she'd overslept. She put her feet out of bed, and Elizabeth turned to go.

"Enoch's had his breakfast," said she, with her air of crisp determination. "Your coffee's on the stove.

I'll go along, and you'd better come the minute you've eaten. There's the nurses' breakfasts and all."

Yes, Eunice called after her, she would. But, as she dressed rapidly, she wondered if she could have dreamed the night that was so different.

XXXIII

Templeton, on the heels of his ironic laughter, rose and, with a look at Sally to indicate that he was quite all right, in spite of her jealous fears, left the room and went upstairs to Amy. He and Pat, he felt, would have to leave the matter where it was. However long they talked about it, they never could get any further. Pat, in making the best of a world where you must take things as you find them, could never understand why his brother should grouse over the loss of a vague idea unfitted to the time, unless, indeed, the rules of the time were conjured in to its development, and this, Templeton himself must know, would be impossible in his unskilled hands. Conform! the time, like all time past, was bidding them, but Templeton couldn't do it, even if he heard, and he would never hear. Perhaps he had forgotten how he invited Champ to take his darling plan and turn it into verse, and how he would have gone into it with him and shown him where, according to his belief, the roots ran and the branches climbed and blossomed. A feeling of kinship and warm generosity drew him to Champ; and besides there was Sally. Champ was Sally's, in some hidden way, whether he would ever be outwardly hers or not. But Pat!

Templeton, as he went up the stairs, felt anything but the irony his laughter might imply. He paused

half-way, his hand on the banister, and wondered at himself for caring so much. It was true he had not thought of his dear project through these terrifying days; but now he found it had lain in the back of his mind like a beloved portrait in a room forever closed. The dust would gather on the face, but it could not, to the remembering heart, change it by a look. His brother had broken down the walls where the picture hung, he had hacked it from its frame and gone out to hawk it in the market-place, and the room that had been a secret shrine was open to the winds. Nothing was permanent, his heavy heart told him. Everything was at the mercy of this cruel god called Chance, a god who laid about him wantonly, slaying the innocent with the guilty. It was Chance that had slain Amy, coming out of nowhere, hurling itself on again to slay others innocent as she. He had still not dwelt on the thought of the actual creature that came out of nowhere. Neither he nor Sally had asked each other who could have come hurtling through the Calvert woods and, having done the deed the hostile god decreed, rushed on, unrecognised, to more wantonness. That seemed unimportant. If Amy died, did they want the cup of retribution to be filled, and her slayer to be also slain? He had not thought of that. His mind was centred on one spot; the possibility of Amy's return to life. She had liked her life, poor Amy! it had satisfied her, or seemed to satisfy. Beyond that he could not go. But the blind god Chance had not been willing to leave him there in his indifference. It insisted on being recognised. It tapped Templeton on the arm and said: "I am here. You need not listen to me, only to your

brother who has betrayed you. But he did it because I told him to. I am Chance, but I am also a god. I am allowed to reign."

What had upheld Templeton most securely was the stern loveliness of law. It had been the integrity of the universe, the one testimony to a God who might, by happy fate, be loving, but was assuredly, through every proof of moon and tide, of the fire that burns and water that fulfils His word, unfalteringly just. But now—Chance! What was it, attacking you in the back, pushing you into a bog, knifing you in your bed? He went up the stairs to Amy, halting at her door to get command of his legs and keep him from blundering noisily. As he stood there looking in, the room itself seemed to him the only changeless picture of remembered time. There was the dreadful order of it. He wished he could see some of her clothes thrown about as he had seen them when she dressed in haste and ran to catch a train. Her habits were all exquisite, but she never had time for any exactness of order, and a certain rose-pink wrapper was often hanging over a chair after she had fled. He longed for it now as passionately as if it were a token of her rising to slip it on again. The nurse sat at a little distance from the bed, inaccessible in her watchful calm. He was conscious of loving and hating her in equal measure. She seemed to hold Amy's life in her thin strong hands, and he felt the helpless anger of the suppliant who must conciliate a power he does not comprehend. Noiseless as he was, she always knew he was coming, and now she looked up and gave him her professional smile, which seemed, as ever, to hold a futile encouragement. It embodied all the benevolent

maxims of perplexing life. She appeared to be telling him it was darkest before dawn, and that clouds had silver linings; but he knew if he asked her a question about her charge—wholly hers now, never for a minute his—she would tell him only what she judged it best for him to know.

And Amy, too, could tell him nothing, whether she suffered pain or terror, whether she dreamed or merely slept. Since she might be dreaming darkly and not able to call him to her, he sat down and took her hand again into his, where it lay so often now, and tried to follow her into whatever byway she might be roaming. For wherever she was, he could not help thinking it likely she was pursued. Chance, the common enemy, had untiring feet.

Sally, when he had left them together, stood looking at Pat enquiringly, and he answered her by an unembarrassed smile.

"What was it?" she asked. "What had you been telling him."

"He's nervous, poor chap," said Pat. "You can't wonder. What did I tell him? Oh, about selling my play and having to get back to see about the English rights. I offered to take his passage off his hands."

She still stood looking at him gravely, perhaps, as it seemed to him, looking through him at something else. She had, he knew, such stares of absorption, and no wonder she had now, poor kid. But when she turned away from him with no comment, she was not thinking about his play, which seemed to her, like all earthly circumstance, of no great account, with the picture of reality always before her eyes. She understood why

father had broken into that sudden laughter. Pat would take over his passage, would he? Probably Templeton hadn't thought of his lost adventure since he, too, had shivered back from the picture of Amy white and broken in her trance, but now, reminded of it in the way of a practical transaction, he had laughed out at mortal irony. And she, too, though briefly, thought of the blundering god Chance. But she had nothing to say to Pat, because he also had become so shadowy a figure in relation to the road they walked, and she saw Champ coming to make his daily enquiry. Champ was never shadowy. He was Saint Michael, and had brought Amy home. When he came for a few minutes every day, it might have been a special mission to keep her own heart up, so promptly did it rise, in answer. She went out to meet him.

XXXIV

Champ always came walking fast but lightly as if, she thought, he were truly Saint Michael on a mission and had wings. But that was nonsense, because the wings would have to be on his feet, and it was only Mercury who wore them there. To-day she had time to note his face before they spoke. It was graver, devoid of that eagerness it had worn of late, an implication that, however bad her news of Amy, somehow he could make it right. He would never run the risk of being a hindrance by coming in, and she stepped out beside him.

"Let's go for a little walk," she said. "Nobody needs me."

It would please him, she knew, to take her away for a minute from the scene of her fear. Also, she had something to do for him. They walked down to the road, and he asked her:

"Which way?"

"Down to your woods," said she. "We could go up to the violet bank. I've just about time."

She started on, and he had to follow.

"No, Sally, not the woods," he said.

"We mustn't let it spoil the woods," said Sally, looking at him with a hint of the smile he had never been able to understand. It always seemed to imply a courage sworn not to yield and yet a tinge of something confidential that told you smiling was not always

mirth. It was a form of communication, one of the words in the language of life. It was a flag, too, an unconquerable banner. "Mother wouldn't want it to," Sally went on. "She'd feel dreadfully, if her being hurt had spoiled your woods for you."

They walked on to the opening of the wood road, and their feet were on the ground where Irene had done her wild deed and turned to fly from it. The evidence of it had been erased by other tracks. That first afternoon when Irene had locked herself in her room, he had found time to run up there to test her story by the mark of her tire, if he could. It was a lonesome way few cars were likely to take, and he had found the mark cut deep into the road. He put his hand on Sally's arm and hurried her over the guilty ground, and presently they were in the shade of the woods. There she stopped, a little faint, a little sick with thought. So she had remembered. It had seemed possible, in her absorption through these crucial days, that she had not really taken it in. But she knew.

"I don't believe we'll go up to the bank, after all," said she. "Let's stop here a minute, and then we'll go back. Now about mother. She's just the same. I've talked with the doctor. He thinks it's her back—permanently. She may not move again. But he isn't sure. He's going to bring out two other men, specialists." Having delivered her bulletin in that unmoved tone, yet gravely, she went on. "Have you seen her, Champ?" She might have been asking if he had seen her mother, or she might have meant Irene. "Yes," she said, as he did not speak, "I mean her—Irene. Have you seen Irene?" Her face suddenly went white, and

he put his arm under hers again. "I guess I am tired," said she. "Let's sit down. Here's a nice little knoll." She stepped aside into a clearing under the pines. There she sat down and clasped her knees with her hands. "You mustn't get out of humor with your woods, Champ," she said, smiling at him again, that little smile he could not bear to see. There was a hurt in it, not perhaps Sally's own, but a knowledge of the hurt of life. "You won't write your poetry, if you do. Don't be too sorry for us. Sometimes when I look at mother lying there, I feel as if she knew a lot of things she didn't when she was awake. Like sleep, you know. Like dreams. Maybe mother's dreaming, nice things, things she didn't have time to see before. She'd know if she'd spoiled your woods. But now"—she seemed to hurry away from mother who was, after all, not his intimate concern, though he had been Saint Michael and rescued her—"about Irene. You can tell me, Champ. I have to know."

She seemed insistent in a way that troubled him. He had meant to tell nobody about Irene, not only for her own sake but because he judged it would be less terrible to Sally to think of her mother's destroyer as an unthinking force that killed and fled, perhaps in terror at itself: not this little creature who had seemed, whenever they three met, to put a possessive hand on him. Perhaps there was fear in it, too, that Sally, remembering the possessive hand, might shrink from him also as an involuntary agent in the deed. But he had to answer.

"Well," he said, "I've seen her."

If her face could have been more distressing to him, it seemed to be now, in the persistency with which her eyes met his.

"How has it affected her?" she asked, in the most practical manner, and as if she had to know. But how much did she know? Everything, it seemed, she was so sure of her right to question him. "Is it dreadful to her?" she continued.

He did not speak.

"Is she broken? or doesn't she take it in?"

"Yes," he said gravely. "She knows. I told her."

"Oh!" said Sally thoughtfully. "I had an idea you wouldn't. You didn't tell me you knew she did it. No, no," she added, seeing he was about to speak. "Of course you didn't. It was to spare me. And I never asked you. Father never did. Why should we? The only thing for us was that it was done. So I thought probably you were sparing her. But if you couldn't, if she came to you—why, I wanted to know what it's done to her."

"Yes," said Champ heavily. "She did come to us. She's there now."

Sally had seemed to know so much that he expected her to have learned that, and he spoke without premeditation.

"There now?" she repeated. "At your house?"

"Yes," he said, "she's staying there."

"Staying there!" Sally repeated stupidly. "Since when?"

"Since—" he hesitated. He remembered the exact number of days since the accident, and tried to think

how one could speak of it. But she knew, and mentally answered for him. And now she began to tread delicately.

"Then you've seen, of course, how it's affected her. She must have talked to you."

"Not after the first," said Champ. He saw no way but to go into it explicitly. "She came to me that same day. She was as frightened as"—he had almost said, "as you could wish" but added—"as frightened as you might think. She went all to pieces. And on that she—well, she refused to go home."

Several practical questions flew into Sally's brain and began to beat about there. Did Mrs. Renfrew know? If Irene refused to go home then, when was she going? But though she heard the questions beating about, she refused to recognise them, only saying thoughtfully:

"Then, if she's there, you can tell her, if it seems best to you, that we aren't thinking of her—nor speaking either, to each other or anybody else. She can go home," said Sally, rather bitterly, "if she wants to. But I don't suppose she does. She feels safe with you."

The bitterness escaped him; but there was something he, too, wanted to know.

"Sally," he said, "when did you find out she did it?"

"Why, that day," she said, at once, "as soon as I could stop to think. I'd seen her go by, speeding for all she was worth, and when you told me, in those few words, I knew. But it didn't matter who. Let her understand that. If she's really dwelling on it, tell her and make her get hold of herself and behave. She mustn't lie down on you, Champ, and luxuriate in

being rescued. And your father! how he must hate seeing her there, hung round your neck."

Champ looked at her with such astonished eyes that she broke down and laughed shortly, though it had seemed to her that she was done with laughter, and the sound was strange to her. But she was wholly outside that composure where she dwelt when they were together, watching him with bright eyes and ready to dart back if he saw too clearly.

"Champ," said she, "do you know when she means to leave your house?"

"No," he said, rather expecting her to know, since she seemed to know everything.

"Never," she pronounced. "She is there. She has walled herself in and she will stay. And then she'll marry you."

"My God!" he was near groaning. But it would not do. He could abuse Irene to her face, but not to another woman.

"Don't be a silly," he bade her gently.

She did not seem to hear.

"And you mustn't," she said. "Champ, you must not do it. Don't you see how dreadful it would be? You're sorry for her. I don't wonder at it. I'm sorry myself, frightfully sorry. But it's weakening to men, to be too sorry. If they are, they promise anything, walk right into it with their eyes open. That's how women get them—often. And then it's done."

Champ knew he was looking at a Sally he had never seen, even by a fleeting glimpse. He stood staring at her and then he said, with an old-fashioned stiffness:

"It's very good of you, Sally. I'll try to deserve it."

She drew a quick breath and the fire of the moment seemed to have gone out of her.

"Now," said she, "let's go home. I've said all I had to say. I guess I've said all I thought, and that's dangerous. But don't let it be dangerous, Champ, to either of you. Or me—for if anybody muddles up your life I shall be pretty desperate."

He could not well reply to this, except by saying he wasn't worth so much pother, and they walked down the wood path to the road and back to Red House, not speaking. When he left her at the door, he said:

"Perhaps you'll come out a minute to-morrow. Little walks will do you good."

Before he reached home, he found his father coming along the road in the evident hope of meeting him. Stephen was manifestly nervous. He carried the morning paper folded in his hand and sometimes slapped his leg with it, as if he were castigating himself. Before Champ had got to him, he hailed him worriedly.

"Champ, look here. Yes, stop a minute so we can talk. What are you going to do about that girl?"

Champ resisted the obvious artifice of seeming to wonder what girl, and replied rather wearily:

"I don't know. Nothing, I guess. Come on to the house. We can talk as we go along."

"No, no," said Stephen, giving himself a particularly violent slap, "she's come downstairs. She's there in the library, pretending to read, and she's been talking with me. We've been at it half an hour. I wish to God you'd be on hand when she takes it into her head to come down. You got her here."

Champ did not reply that she came by her own will,

for actually he knew he had got her there, if not at this particular time, by merely existing, by being, in his relation to her, most mawkish and inept. There was no characterising it, and he had given it up. In the tumultuous relations of Irene and her gang, it seemed to him he had been singularly old-fashioned and, indeed, in their eyes, priggish; but strangely, though the relations of the others were so tenuous that nobody was held to exact ties and standards, Irene, having selected him, had clutched and would not let him go.

"And her mother's been over here," Old Stephen lamented, his face a map of wrinkling misery.

Champ did feel some interest in that.

"Well," he said, "what happened?"

"Nothing happened. The girl wouldn't come down. Sent word she wasn't able. And that woman talked to me, Champ, stayed and talked. Asked me what it meant, why we'd invited Irene, said she'd no real objection if you and she were engaged, but she didn't understand such doings. I told her I didn't either."

"Well!" said Champ. He took the paper gently out of his father's hand. It seemed to him Old Stephen was in danger of being black and blue. "What then?"

"Why, nothing then," said Stephen angrily. He waved his hands in front of him, grotesquely. "That's all we said. We said it over and over, she saying she didn't understand things nowadays and I saying I didn't either. And she went away, and in a minute the girl comes down as cool as a cucumber—and pretty near as naked—oh, yes! you needn't look at me. I know what underclothes are, and she hadn't hardly a rag to cover her. And she sat down and began to talk.

What about, do you think? Why, my business, of all things. She knew I'd been in leather and she thought that's what I could talk about."

"Well, don't get huffy over that," said Champ, thankful for a loosening of tension. "She didn't know you're fed up with it. You might have told her to begin talking about your only son and she'd find an audience."

"No, she wouldn't either," said Stephen spitefully. "Do you suppose I'd talk you over with her? not by a jugful! Champ, are you going to marry her?"

"I don't know," said Champ. "For heaven's sake, let's not assume she'd have me."

"Bah!" said Stephen. "Have you! I'm not young, my boy, and I haven't got a college degree, but my eyesight is good and sometimes I do see an inch beyond my nose. Her being downstairs, now: I see through that, if you don't. Her mother's been and gone. That's what she's been afraid of—afraid she couldn't refuse to go home with her without seeming disobedient and all that. Seeming so to you. And now the danger's over and down she comes, and you've got to entertain her. Damned if I will. Yes, I'll be damned!"

Champ had never seen him so irresponsibly naughty, and there was something tonic in it, a humorous exhilaration.

"Well, you must acknowledge," he said, "she is a guest, however she became one, and you've always told me——"

"I don't care what I've told you," said Stephen. "Whatever it is, I'm not going to stand for it myself, if I don't want to. I won't sit at the table with her

and be talked to about leather. If she can have her meals in her room, so can I. No, I can't either! If I leave her with you she'll cry into her plate and you'll be sorry for her, and ten to one you'll tie yourself up hand and foot."

"But you mustn't forget," said Champ, peaceably, "she has every reason to cry into her plate."

"The little devil!" said Stephen. "Hadn't ought to be trusted with a car. Running folks down! And that Sally!"

Champ took him by the arm and tried the rallying his father loved.

"Come on in," he said. "It's got to be met. Be a sport, Stephen. We can't stay out here and cry."

So Stephen, muttering to himself, was led home to luncheon, and Champ, going first into the library, found Irene sitting on the big sofa where she had made her confession, a small wisp of a figure—sufficiently clad, he had time to think—and she looked up at him with large eyes that had not lost their pathos. He had nothing to say, but she was ready.

"I came down," she said. "I felt stronger. And mother's been here, so I knew I shouldn't run the risk of meeting her. I don't know what she said, but whatever it was I couldn't have stood up against it. Mother's too conventional. She wouldn't understand. Champ, you do. Come here and tell me you understand."

She held out her thin white hands to him, their thinness acquired, like that of her small frame, at the expense of the daily fasting she hated. Irene was not among the lucky of her associates. She was not made,

either emotionally or physically, for the present game of attenuation and a strenuous life; she had to live in perpetual training. Champ went over and stood by her, taking one of the hands in his and stroking it gently from wrist to finger-tips. Sally was right. He was sorry for her. She seemed to be removed as far as possible from any fitness for a tragic rôle, and yet she had blundered into one in a mere fit of childish passion for which she should have been punished like a child, —or not punished at all, since life and its dark issues were blank pages to her small intelligence. And now she was clinging to his hand with both hers and asking, like a child:

"What are you going to do with me? You're the only one that understands."

Should he give her Sally's message, and tell her that, so far as human minds could do it, she was absolved from blood guiltiness? No, she did not yet comprehend the ugliness of what she had done, and she would not comprehend this either. But at least she must not be here. His father had rights in his own house, and one of them was to live in it without this small, disturbing presence. He went at it brutally.

"Your mother's right, Irene. You ought to be at home."

She looked up at him unbelievingly.

"But if I'm afraid?" she said. "And I am afraid everywhere but with you. If I can't stay here, take me where you and I can be together and I could begin to forget. I'd go anywhere, Champ, with you. We could go abroad."

He had withdrawn his hand, not so much by design

as because he could not bear the touch of her soft cheek against it, wet with tears.

"I can't go abroad," said he. "Even if I wanted to, I can't."

"I know why you can't," she stabbed back at him. "You're standing by that girl. You've been to see her now. Your father told me. He didn't mean to, but I asked him and he said you went every day. How can you, Champ, and let them question you and find out I'm here and—all about that day?"

She was sobbing and the sobs were real. She was afraid. Should he give her Sally's message? No, better not mix up Sally in it at all. There was no limit to the wild energy of this little creature, and some day she would be over there, getting into the house, hurling herself at Templeton himself, in her insane hunger for the movement and outcry of bare emotion.

"Don't tell me," she was buffeting him wildly, "they haven't asked about me."

He ignored that.

"Do you imagine," he said sternly, "they've any time to think about you when she lies there—why, she has scarcely opened her eyes yet. What difference does it make to them who did it, so long as it was done? There's just one thing for you to do. Go home and let your mother see you're in your senses. She must doubt it by this time. I'll take you over this afternoon."

The small hands were clinging to him. In her choking speech was the sincerity of fear.

"How can you turn against me?" she was moaning, her hands beating against him as if to awaken some

kinder self. "You wouldn't treat a dog like that. If I were a child, you'd put your arms round me, even if I had done wrong. I won't live. I tell you, I won't live. I'll do something to myself and you'll see."

He was so sorry for her that, in another moment, he might indeed have put his arms about her and tried to soothe her folly as if it had been a child's; but the last words repelled him and he stepped back, letting the clinging hands fall.

"That was what you said before," he reminded her. "You were going to kill yourself, and instead you killed somebody else—or worse. It may be worse for her that you haven't killed her. I wouldn't try it again, if I were you."

At that, she fell to sobbing uncontrollably, and Old Stephen, who had been walking up and down the hall, dreading the moment of luncheon and Ormond's noiseless presence on the scene, came into the library and saying "There! there! there!" in what seemed bound to be an endless staccato, went up to her and began stroking her disordered hair, while Champ stood by and watched him.

"There! there!" said Stephen. "You're all beat out. You stop crying, my dear, or that man'll hear you. He'll be round in a minute, to tell us luncheon's ready. Ormond, you know. Luncheon. One o'clock. But you can't come to the table, can you? You're all mussed up, your pretty clothes and all. You run upstairs. No, I see you can't. Champ, you carry her upstairs. Quick! it's striking one."

Champ in amazement over his father and a deeper amazement at himself, did pick her up in his arms and

run up the stairs with her, carried her into her room and dropped her on the bed. And even now, at the moment of defeat, the small hands held him.

"O Champ," she was saying, in a small wailing voice, "if you'd only be kind to me, just kind—like this—maybe I could live."

He had recovered his spirits, partly in delight at the overthrow of Old Stephen and partly in relief at having got her away from the servants' goggling eyes.

"Buck up, Irene," he counselled. "If you weren't an idiot, you and I could have some decent times together. Now wash your face and powder your nose, and in ten minutes I'll send you up some luncheon. Because you're a sight, Irene, when you get to bawling like this, a perfect sight. Look at yourself in the glass. I'll bring you a glass, shall I? this little one? Don't want it? I don't wonder. You certainly are a sight."

He talked himself out of the room and went down to luncheon with a new respect for his father. But Stephen, looking shamefaced, avoided his eye, and they had a rather animated luncheon, surprising Ormond, who was not used to such vivacious talk, broken by sudden fits of laughter from Mr. Champney, upon which his father would grin and say in a low tone, "Don't, Champ!" There was nothing particularly amusing about the talk, so Ormond thought.

XXXV

And now there seemed to be no hour of the day or night when Elizabeth or her mother could escape each other's watchfulness. If they were at Red House and there was a likelihood of Elizabeth's meeting Templeton and perhaps having a word with him, there was her mother also. Elizabeth accepted it as one of the dark phases of heavy weather, and, since she wanted only to watch over him and keep his house in order, it deprived her of nothing she hoped to gain. It was tiring to feel, if she were for a moment in a room alone with him, that her mother's burning gaze was on her from the doorway; but so long as he suspected nothing it did not matter, save as one might feel the heat or cold. It was not the lightning from a cloud. Templeton was unconscious of it, and she knew he always would be. He believed in the fullest liberty for everybody about him, and if the servitors of the house intruded on his solitude he accepted it and took his work somewhere else. But now there was no work: only the ceaseless vigil by Amy's bedside, waiting for her to wake and, if it might be, speak to him.

And she did wake, though after many days. Her large eyes fixed themselves on him, and she seemed to accept his being there, but without emotion. He said her name softly, and gave a little pressure of the hand in his; but nothing answered him. He thought, for

an instant, from the slight movement of her fingers, that she was clinging to him for help. But a quick contraction came in her forehead, as if the pain were uppermost. She shut her eyes, and the nurse resumed possession of her and sent him out of the room. After that, there was more morphia and, it seemed, a return to the first days of her misery. It was as if Amy had battled to the surface and, like a spent swimmer, sunk again. His tired mind kept dwelling on it as the second time of sinking and, remembering the old dictum about rising three times, he thought the next time would be the third and she would sink for good.

When he came from the room that day, Elizabeth met him in the hall and, unhindered by her mother's watchful gaze that must, she knew, be on her, followed him into the library and shut the door. The sight of his face had been too much for her; it was blurred with lack of sleep, and fallen into new lines, especially about the eyes. Her composure was overthrown. After she had shut the door, she turned the key softly, and then, as he stood by the table, his hand resting on it and his gaze turned inward, as if he interrogated his own thoughts and begged them to tell him what he should do next, she went to him and touched his hand with hers. He started and looked at her, in the unawareness of a man whose brain is incapable of meeting outside stimulus. Elizabeth spoke, and her voice was exquisite. She had taken no thought of it, but all the springs of maternal and wifely love had gushed together into it.

"You lie down," said she. "I'll lock you in and nobody shall come near you till you've had some sleep."

Templeton shook his head and tried to smile and thank her. She was Elizabeth and she was kind, but it was only the kindness that mattered. She saw that, and it gave her a sense of exquisite freedom. Nothing in her spoke to him with any individual note, and that gave her leave to pour out her feeling for him, in some way, she did not know how, to show him that his weariness was not a thing to accept as of no importance. She felt it so tremendously that she did not care who knew it. After the little touch, she withdrew her hand and stood looking at him, all a breathing pity.

"No," he said kindly. "I don't need to sleep. But I'll sit down here a minute. The day is too bright. It hurts my eyes."

He pulled back the chair from the writing table, sat down in it, mechanically drew a block of paper toward him and selected a pencil from the tray. All her senses were quickened so that she knew why he was doing it and why he would go on making a pretense of writing: to get rid of the presence at his elbow before he revealed his inward misery. It would be kind to leave him; but she could not go. She felt outside herself, in a curious way. It was as if her soul had left her body and knelt at his feet, to worship him and also to put earthly arms about him and fold him to its earthly breast. Were these imaginings, or did her soul, as she stood there, accomplish some mystic service? Surely her mortal arms also were about him, and had drawn him to her heart; yet her eyes insisted on the vision of him sitting there sunken over the table, his lax hand on the paper. She was as still as water in a glass, standing beside him and holding the rites

of a mystical union, her soul pouring itself forth for his. If she could have given him more by the testimony of her shaken body, she was ready to give that also; but the certainty that went with her high spiritual tension forbade, lest in breaking the exquisite moment she broke also his unconscious acquiescence. She could give only through his ignorance that he was receiving. But somehow, though he had forgotten her, he must have shared the trancelike moment, for, when a sound came from the hall without, he started, as if waking from a dream. He looked up at her.

"That you, Elizabeth?" he asked. "What's that noise?"

It was a knocking at the door, loud, insistent, rap on rap. Templeton, his drowsiness gone, if he had been drowsy, rose, pushed back his chair and went to open the door. But Elizabeth was before him. She knew what she should find. She put back one hand, a signalling gesture to bar his way.

"It's my mother," she said. "She wants me."

She unlocked the door, stepped quickly out, took Eunice by the arm and turned with her to the kitchen. For two or three paces, Eunice resisted her; but Elizabeth was the stronger and the more determined, since she knew exactly what she had to do, and Eunice, though she wanted to escape and so face Templeton, was half afraid. She kept muttering her protest and, in the familiar surroundings of the kitchen, she could speak.

"You let me be," she said breathlessly.

Elizabeth released her, and now stood by the closed kitchen door to prevent her going. The two women

fronted each other, Elizabeth, her mother told herself in anguish, looking "like death," and she herself shaking from head to foot. Their old relations were gone. They were on a level. No longer was Elizabeth the maddening autocrat who ruled by virtue of a higher culture. She was, in her mother's eyes, a shameless woman. And because her mother had lost her old unwilling reverence for a superiority she had hated and adored, she spoke out with an untrammeled virulence, that was yet, Elizabeth had the sensitiveness to feel, an anguish of maternal love.

"You get your things," said Eunice, "an' come home with me. If you was a head shorter, I'd whip you, carryin' on so with a married man. Your father'd turn in his grave if he could see you as you look this minute an' know what I know."

Her father! when had Elizabeth heard him mentioned, the abject servitor of the earth that had to be tilled, the tyrant of the house, who not only scourged wife and child to impotent hatred of him, but wore himself into the grave? For an instant, she saw him as she could not remember him, an authority, a guardian of the rites of home, and realised that father must sometime have been young. She went to get her hat, and brought her mother's also. She was dumbly willing to acquiesce in her own sentence of banishment, if she could get her mother also away. They must both return in order that she might keep Eunice under her eye: for Templeton's house could not be neglected in this time of trial. But that could be brought about later, when the present wave had ebbed.

They went hurrying along the field path, faster and

faster, each distrusting the other, each fearing the other might somehow escape. When they reached the house, Elizabeth, with the courtesy she never intermitted, stood aside to let her mother pass; but Eunice also stopped and Elizabeth saw, with a faint amusement, that her mother was afraid to trust her for even that one instant. So she stepped inside and Eunice followed her. In the sitting room, Elizabeth, tired beyond endurance, sat down on the sofa, leaned her head against the wall and closed her eyes. Her mother walked about the room, in a nervous pretext of putting it in order; but tears were running down her cheeks. She felt sodden with a misery she longed to hide: for no one would care whether she felt it or not. So she kept her face turned from Elizabeth, in her busy pretexts about the room, and presently escaped into the kitchen, as if she had importunate tasks there, and then slipped upstairs. Like Elizabeth, she was tired out, and she took the chair by the chamber window, lest, if she lay down on the bed, she should fall asleep. For there were other things the night had for her to do. And, sitting there, a sharpness of grief came over her such as she had not before felt, and this was not the old pain that had been beating in her heart all these latter years because Elizabeth did not love her. It was a passionate sorrow over Elizabeth herself. It was not a dignified daughter who used proper language and read books in a strange tongue who was downstairs there thinking, not of her mother or even her mother's anger because she had fallen into the bog of an illicit love. It was the child Elizabeth, who had been the only delight of her early life.

She went back to the springtime wonder of the child, the little perfect body, the small feet so beautiful it seemed as if they could never stray, the heartbreaking loveliness of the waving hands. Had that perfection of nature's artistry come into being to be tripped by the old lures, smothered in the old desires? Pictures flashed into her mind so fast that they might have blurred each other, and yet so perfect that they kept their outline clear as winter trees against the sky. There was the child Elizabeth, sitting on the doorstep at twilight with her bowl of bread and milk. There was the child Elizabeth learning to say "Now I lay me": the only prayer her mother taught her because the Lord's Prayer, Eunice had an undefined belief, was not for little nightied people at mother's knee, but somehow for Sundays only. And Elizabeth always played so hard through that child's paradise, the hour or two "'tween daylight an' dark" that she never got beyond "If I should die before I wake," before her brown head sank sideways and her long eyelashes came down. Then Eunice would lift her from her little fat knees and put her into bed and stand—she remembered doing it in the moonlight—worshiping her, and because she only remembered the moonlight nights when she could see the dark head on the pillow, it seemed to her now that, in those days, it was moonlight all the time.

There was Elizabeth, in her rare moments of wild, gleeful action, running with the cat on her shoulder. Her mother could remember one such November afternoon when she stopped short in some pressing task, to stand at the window and watch the child running,

curls streaming, in a mad north wind, the cat clinging with all its claws. There was another day when father told how a man who owed him sixty-three cents fought shy of him in the country store, and Elizabeth, with a rare display of humor, pretended she owed the cat sixty-three cents, and spent the day avoiding her; and how even father, who never laughed, had to crackle his face up in an unwilling smile. The cat was an untiring playfellow and tagged her everywhere, and Elizabeth shunned her dramatically, with the debtor's haste.

And this was the child Elizabeth, perfection from God's hand. Eunice never felt she knew much about God, except as a Person who mysteriously allowed things to happen which no human being of any decent kindliness could possibly stand for; but if He did make any one thing that was, in its innocent perfection, holy, that thing was Elizabeth. And now perfection itself had grown into the weed of carnal desire, and beauty itself, being vile, was slain.

XXXVI

That night Elizabeth woke to the quick alarm of missing her mother out of the house. She did not stop to question it, but rose, crept to her mother's room and found it closed, an unusual thing on these warmer nights. She lifted the latch softly and looked in. The bed had not been opened, and, with a wild fear upon her, she went back to her room and dressed quickly, not stopping even to pin up the braids of her hair. This alarum seemed to her entirely different from any previous one. It was immediate. It shrieked aloud. Her mother was with him and, crowning disgrace of it all, in his house. She went downstairs, with no precaution of silence since Enoch could not hear, and along the path into the road, and there she began running. It was not only that she was in haste, but action seemed to her the only thing possible to work off the emotion of her overburdened heart. She felt invincible in her strength and swiftness, as if she were running a race with something and everything depended on her rushing to the goal.

First, the dark woods received her, the pines that were, on a hot summer day, the alembic of fragrance, then out into the more open road where a brook ran eloquently, and by the steep bank where Eunice had sat with Blaisdell, his arms about her, that first strange dizzying moment when there seemed actually to be

love in a starving world. Then on between pastures a little less than a mile further, and she came to his house, well in from the road, and stopped, her race accomplished and doubt of the next move assailing her. Should she go up the path, knock at the door and, when he came, ask for her mother, or push in past him to find her? But how could she ask, as if it were a possible thing to seek her mother in that illicit place? Now she had to depend, not on the speed of her flying feet but on her wisdom, her meagre caution; and her baffled brain showed no readiness to serve her. There was no keenness in it. The only life in her was that of her thrilling nerves and bounding heart. But while she stood there, like an unready sentry who sees a figure moving on him and fails to challenge it, she became aware that she was staring at the house as if she needed it to prompt her. One front room was lighted, and, as she looked, she saw a figure moving back and forth within. It moved slowly and yet busily, and she went up the path, watching as she approached, and saw it was her mother and that she was sweeping the room. This meant finality. Her mother had left her own house, she had run away, as the neighborhood would put it, and was beginning to live with him and set his house in order while he was away

But since he had not come, now was the moment to face her mother, overpower her by a violence of demand, not by persuasion, because that was not in Elizabeth's armory, and scourge her forth. She went up the steps, darkened by the disordered branches of an unpruned climbing rose, and tried the door. It was

not fastened, and she walked in. Perhaps her excitement was none the less for feeling that this was a vital move which would bring her nearer her mother or part their lives forever.

Eunice, at the sound of steps, stopped sweeping and stood, broom in hand, her face turned toward the door and looking, Elizabeth savagely felt, so flushed with anticipatory pleasure that she must have expected Blaisdell himself, ahead of his usual time. Out of her hurt and her anger, Elizabeth was the more violent.

"Put down that broom," she said, in a low tone, though it was, as Eunice bitterly felt, the voice of authority. "I've come to take you home."

Her mother answered by moving a chair out of the way and beginning to sweep rapidly in the corner behind it. Her face, for the moment flushed and softened by her welcoming thought of Blaisdell, fell into its mask of dumb yet obstinate humility.

"I'll come when I get through here," she said. "I ain't got half swept yet. It ain't done upstairs."

"What are you doing it for?" Elizabeth asked, out of her rage and bafflement. "Here in somebody else's house, the middle of the night, sweeping? The kettle's boiling, too. I can hear it rattling the lid. What are you doing in the middle of the night?"

Eunice made one of her quick movements for the dustpan, lying on the hearth, picked it up and swept her pile of dust into it with a deftness that seemed also a savage haste, as if it were a task that had to be done quickly. When she straightened, she stood an instant, holding broom and dustpan, pondering whether she

could give an effective answer or whether she should answer at all. She had decided. She turned to Elizabeth and said quietly, with a certain composure Elizabeth had surprisingly to respect:

"His wife's left him. I can't let him live here in a hog's nest. I'm sweepin' up, against he comes home. I've brought him over some victuals, too. Yes, I do come by night. I might do it by day, except my time ain't my own. Daytimes I'm doin' somethin' else."

She slid the dirt from the dustpan into the fireplace, and began setting back the chairs. Elizabeth shivered a little at the incomplete reference to busy "daytimes." Her mother had to watch her. That was the "something else." Without direct intention, she heard herself asking:

"Have you swept the kitchen?"

"Yes," said Eunice. "I left this to the last, in case I didn't have time."

"Then," said Elizabeth, "you go and finish upstairs and I'll wash the kitchen floor."

Eunice turned upon her with a wildness which was startling after her dogged calm.

"No!" she said sharply. "I won't have it. You sha'n't lift a finger in this house."

To Elizabeth, in her anger, it seemed that her mother wanted to keep the jealous task to herself, and she answered bitterly:

"You needn't worry. I'm doing it so you can get through and go back with me. I've no interest in doing for anybody else."

"It ain't that," cried Eunice. "You wouldn't do it

at all, if you knew. You don't know! you don't know!"

The moment had come which Elizabeth, when she fancied it marching on them, had always feared. They could not fight any longer from a stealthy ambush. It must be face to face.

"I do know," she dragged out of her unwilling mind. "I know the whole."

Eunice gave a low moan.

"No, you don't," she said. "You don't know the whole."

She, in her turn, was repudiating suspicion, for the whole truth was, she wanted words to explain, that she had not been loosely vile. She loved him, and he needed her. And strangely, she was suffering not so much from the fear that Elizabeth would guess too much, but from the anguish of finding the child of her body ready to suspect her of the lewd ways of love.

"I know enough," Elizabeth was saying sternly, and her mother turned the tide of blame by a counter stroke, out of her misery over the child Elizabeth.

She put down her broom, and took the step that brought them close. She wanted to lay a hand on Elizabeth's shoulder and shake the truth out of her but, in the face of those accusatory eyes, she did not dare. She did put her anguished question:

"Are you good? you tell me if you're good!"

A wave of astonishment rose in Elizabeth, and she answered without premeditation:

"I don't know whether I'm good or bad. If you

mean"—anger swelled the wave of feeling, and she ended violently, "if you mean, am I in love with anybody that I've no business to"—even in her passion, she was conscious of searching about wildly for a lost clarity of speech—"I'd die for 'em this minute, just as you heard me say. Die? Dying would be easy. But if you think anybody wants me to feel that way, you're mistaken. He's as far above such things——"

There she ended, and Eunice stood looking at her piteously, studying her face, knowing the bald words were true, but not delivered yet from the fear that somehow the child Elizabeth was lost, if not in the mazes of man's sin, in woman's misery. Elizabeth found herself shaking all over, and she spoke with difficulty:

"You go upstairs and do what you've got to do. I'll wait for you down here."

Eunice had lived a silent life, but now she made a little cry, and went on moaning softly, as if she had been given a hurt that could not be assuaged. But seeing Elizabeth must somehow be got rid of before he came, and that the only way to compass it was to hurry through her tasks, she took the broom again and went upstairs. Elizabeth, only waiting to be sure she had begun work above, found the mop and pail and began washing the kitchen floor. The mop was an old one that worked indifferently well, and she was aware that it would have been easier to wash the floor on hands and knees. But, with that thought, she flushed indignantly and knew that, for some obscure reason, she could not go on her knees in this house

to do what seemed, for the first time and here only, a debasing task. She could wash his floor as one step in her mother's liberation, but she would not kneel to do it.

When it was done and she had put the pail and mop away, she looked about her for a further task and found none. There was a basket on the table, its contents covered with a fine napkin, and she knew it came from home. That she would not touch, and she stood waiting until her mother should come. Elizabeth was tired but, with a return to old formalities of virtue in country regions, she did not sit down. She would not accept from this house the slightest alms of hospitality. Eunice came down shortly, with a lagging step. Her emotion spent, she was dead tired and half asleep. Elizabeth took the broom from her and was about to hang it on a nail, but her mother said wearily:

"No, it don't belong there. You let it be."

She uncovered the basket, took out bread and cake, and set his place at the table. Elizabeth, watching her with a dull curiosity, felt a forsaken child's jealous pang at seeing she had brought some of the oak leaf cookies that were the delight of her own earliest memory. It was always understood, in the fond ways of that lost playtime, that they were made for her. Then she was Gladys, before the high moment when she became Elizabeth; they had been Glad's little cakes. Strange, she thought, that so small a thing could give her such a pang, when really all she cared about was, not oak leaf cookies, but to get her mother out of this wicked house.

Eunice had finished setting the table. She stood

back and looked at it, seemed to conclude that nothing had been forgotten, and took up her empty basket.

"There," she said, "I guess that's all. You go along. I'll put out the light."

Elizabeth held the screen door for her to pass. Eunice shut the outer door carefully, and they went silently away together, as if this had been the commonplace of kindly service in a neighbor's house.

XXXVII

It was late June now, and Templeton, when he went into his wife's room, still found her as blank as a book in an unknown tongue. She was alive again, and the processes of life went on. She ate sparingly, though without interest, she looked at him, and he saw recognition in her eyes; but she herself was withdrawn. Where had the reality of her gone, the unseen verity known as the spirit? for it was as indubitably absent as when it found the doors of sense closed to it by anæsthesia, and had to stay mysteriously imprisoned, though keeping its calm majesty unchanged. Templeton thought of her all the time, not in anxiety over her remoteness, but with a steady persistency, as if he were going with her through a darkened path and must not intermit his gaze upon her or withdraw his hand. There was no actual way of finding out whether she wanted that sustaining hand, but he knew he must not for an instant take it from her. And yet, he sometimes wondered for a moment before he could forbid himself the thought, was she even further withdrawn now than she had always been? Who was the Amy behind the human barrier that defends the soul? Whoever she was, it did not matter. She was there in her prison, and the walls had been wrecked by the lightning of the skies, though not so destroyed as to let the

spirit free, and, wherever she was, there must he be at her side.

His intercourse with Sally was hardly articulate. They lived on the surface of life, in the aspects of spring and the practical requirements of the day. Sally was a distinctly older person, cheerful enough, but like a mother absorbed in cares. Perhaps her father did not see her very closely, in these days; perhaps Champ was the only one who did. He came regularly for their little walk, sometimes to be denied because she could not go then, but always dropping in later on the chance of it. And as at first it had been by her will, now it became a habit to go up through the woods to the violet bank. One afternoon when they sat there in the dappled shade, Sally in her favorite posture of hands about her knees, she asked him:

"How about the little novels? You haven't chucked them, have you?"

No, Champ said, he had not. He had tried the book on a new firm starting out with lots of cheek and money to burn.

"They'd print it. Evidently they haven't much use for it, but they've an idea I might do a modern novel later, and they'd take the little novels for a chance at that. It's a gamble, that's all."

"Could you?" she asked.

"No," said he, "not the kind they want, not stuff about a fellow that says 'Uh-huh' and grows up to find he's had aspirations, like a pain in his insides, and never fulfilled 'em. Not me! Sally!" He seemed to be calling her with a new, sudden insistence and she

looked up at him in a grave attention. "Sally, I've been thinking a lot about you."

"That's nice," said she. "You've stood by like a band of brothers."

"I seem," said Champ, slowly, as if he wanted her to help him with what he had not been able to see very clearly, "to be thinking a lot about what you said the first time we came up here since——"

"Since mother was hurt," said Sally. "Yes, I remember."

"It was about Irene, you know. You said she'd marry me. And you forbade it. You quite forbade it, Sally. Somehow I was mightily set up to think you were interested enough to say no.

Sally turned her eyes on him, grave and tired eyes now, with no sign of embarrassment or desire to avoid the issue.

"Of course I'm interested in you," she said. "I know what you mean. You think I'd have to be interested to take such a liberty. Well, I am."

"And I thought it over and thought you over," said Champ, "and I was mighty grateful to you, and I wanted you to know how you look to me. There's nobody like you. And I wondered what I'd do if I lost you—anyway, you know, by your getting bored with me——"

"I sha'n't get bored," said Sally. "You needn't be afraid."

"And I wondered," said Champ, not hearing her, "if you'd let me say something. It's not that I should bother you now when you're all torn to pieces, as you are, but I'd like you to know you're lovely, the love-

liest thing there is. Don't forget that, darling, will you? Just stop a minute when you're worrying and say, 'I'm the loveliest thing there is.' "

Sally looked much moved and somewhat startled. Perhaps this was the first time she had found him taking her out of the landscape of their common interests to say to himself: "This is Sally. This is how she looks." But she answered at once, quite simply. Why should she pretend to a defensive sexual armor, when she needed none? (But did he know he called her darling? She would give that back to him with a tenderness of her own.)

"You're a dear, Champ," she said. "You're awfully sorry for me, I know, but don't be too sorry. There's something about mother's hurt I can't explain, as if it was something that had to be and we'd got to live through it and not even wish it hadn't been. No, I can't describe it, but it's the way I see my father taking it. I watch him and I try to take it that way, too. It's as if he's too noble to mind. As if he were somehow helping her to be noble, too."

"No," said Champ, "I sha'n't pity you, either of you. You're both too noble. But there's something else, something different. It's something tremendous."

She grew white, as she did the day he brought her mother home. But her grave eyes did not waver.

"You think," she said, "it's being in love. I don't believe it is."

"You don't believe it?"

"No," said Sally. "It's love, of course, the thing you feel for me, but—Champ, you're not in love!"

"How do you know?" he asked, with a sudden jealousy. "What have you felt that I don't feel for you?"

Sally smiled a little.

"Isn't this funny," she said, "for us to sit here like two dull dogs arguing about love? If it was love, we shouldn't do it. We couldn't. We should know."

"I know," said Champ angrily. "You're the one that doesn't. You're turning me over in your mind, and I don't look shipshape. I don't to myself either. I've been a fool about most things. You've seen me yourself, playing the fool for all I'm worth. I'm crocked, a little damaged. Forget that, can't you? What's the use of your being such a darling, if you can't forget? Love me, Sally, love me!"

(So he had called her darling, though now, she thought whimsically, knowing how her father would put it, she was only a darling generically, not in her own proper person.)

"Why, Champ," she said, without debating the wisdom of it, "you don't want me to care a lot about you. It would only be another demand. You wouldn't like another woman tied round your neck."

This was rather cruel, but she was not sorry. He felt it, and flushed red. He spoke with humility.

"Can't you treat me as if I were somebody new, somebody you'd just met? Can't you forget I'm damaged goods?"

It seemed as if they had been walking together through a misty wood and had come out on an upland where the sun struck on their faces and the birds sang. For Sally smiled at him.

"Why, Champ," she said, "you're always new to me

—and always sweet and always dear. You're like the sun god. When you laugh, it's good weather. When you sulk, I feel as if I weighed a million pounds. You do sulk, you know. You're no angel." ("Darling" she wanted to add, if, as it seemed, one could indulge in such embroideries and not pay for them afterward.)

But the counter stroke to her honesty was not quite what she expected. Champ's eyes narrowed a little, looking at her as if he had never seen her quite like this, and his face fell into gravity. She saw the muscles tighten round the mouth.

"Then, Sally," he said quietly, "I've got you. What luck! You're going to marry me."

They sat there and looked at each other, both from an obstinate composure.

"No," said Sally, after a minute. "I'm not. I'm going—don't you see, Champ?—I'm going to stay with my mother."

It was a little cry, as if he were pursuing her and she thought of her mother as a refuge.

"You are going," said Champ, "to live close by your mother and your father, too. But you are going to live with me. Stand up, Sally." She did it, and stood looking at him as if he were the wood god and she was frightened. "I don't know," said he angrily, "why I haven't seen you as you are. I knew you were a lovely thing, but there was something beyond, something I never saw, and to-day I've seen it."

"I know," said Sally, as if he tortured her, and the truth would end it, "you never saw I was in love with you. And now you know I am. But that doesn't make you in love with me. And if you were—why, I should

say just the same about my mother. She isn't going to get well, Champ. They told my father so yesterday. She's going to lie there like that as long as she lives—and she may live a long, long time."

His heart overflowed with pity. He wanted to take her into his arms and comfort her like the child she seemed to him, a child of romantic dreams; but if he did, would she come with him any more into the woods? Should he lose her by "much cherishing?"

"Then," he said, "if I'll shut up about it, will you let me keep what I've got, and not try to choke me off because I've asked for more? Be a good fellow, Sally, and say you won't forsake me."

"I'll never forsake you," said Sally, smiling at him in her old way, but looking so fagged that he cursed himself for bringing it on her at a time like this. "Now let's go home."

They took the wood path, not talking any more, and, just before they reached the highroad, he startled her by breaking into song:

> "Your trousers I'll mend
> And your grog still I'll make.

"Beg pardon," he said, when they turned into the road, "but I'm really a very musical fellow, only give me a chance."

XXXVIII

So Templeton had been told that Amy's sentence was for life. She might live a long time, but she would never stand on her feet. He had found himself cowardly about telling Sally. Let her have a few days more, he thought, after the doctors left; but when he did tell her, with much precaution of gentleness, he found her quietly acquiescent.

"Did you know it?" he asked. "Had they told you?"

No, Sally said, they hadn't told her, but somehow she felt sure— She did not finish, and he thought, with an added pang for her, that somehow she did get hold of things unaided, as if she had a long spiritual vision and saw events as they lay like mist-shrouded cities in the distance, waiting for the traveler to come. But that same day Amy herself awoke to tardy knowledge of him. Or had she known him all along, and could not bring herself to speak? He was sitting by her; the nurse had gone out of the room. Amy had been staring at the wall paper beyond, so steadily that he had an uneasy feeling of some one behind him; but now she turned her gaze slightly and rested it full on him.

"Will it be long?" she asked, her voice a little halting but still clear.

He did not like to make her repeat it, but still he had not fully understood. Did she mean her helplessness, or her life? And in either case, must she be told?

"They said," she continued, "they hoped so."

He, too, had heard that. He had been near the door outside and fancied there had been a low halting question from her, and he had heard distinctly that they hoped so. Doubtless she had asked if she could move again. Templeton had no compunction about lying to her. He had never been in a nervous panic of morality, to save his own soul, and still less was he now. If a lie could give her the relief of a drop of water when she was fevered, he would tell it. But he had a sad prevision that it would do no good. A dark figure, perhaps the figure of life-experienced, was standing, invisible but apparent, beside him, a hand on his shoulder, and it forbade. It would do no good, the figure of life-experienced taught him. It was all a higher, deeper issue than that, too deep in the unseen roots of earth, too high among mountain peaks at dawn, to smear it with these debasing middle ways. What page was Amy to read out of the runic mystery of her suffering? Was the forgotten messenger sent to turn the page for her, or was it a hurrying oaf out of the roads of chance that blundered upon her and knocked her into this prison of her palsied flesh? No one could tell and he, humbly he thought, least of all. But the face of the disaster, in spite of its terror for him, seemed incalculably noble and austere. He could not have it less than that. If he had to think merely of her tortured body, he must go under, in some puerile way, and drag her with him. He meant to stay on top.

Her eyes were still interrogating him. They were like live things, tortured, commanding. They would be

answered. What had he to say. He was not a churchman. He never had been, he never could be. The whole symmetry of belief beyond this visible frame was too entirely symbolic to allow him to use words or rites the human mind has woven into an incredible meaning; but he found he was saying to her, or to himself, to keep his floating mind buoyed:

"I believe in God the Father——"

There he stopped dizzily, and she repeated, "God the Father." But she wanted her answer. The eyes demanded it, and he got hold of himself enough to say:

"You see, it's knocked me flat. Pain, your pain. Pain is the devil. But it must mean something, mustn't it?"

And he saw he was not telling her anything or refusing to tell her, but maundering on into a credo of pain, and checked himself and wished for Sally, who would know what to say. But Amy herself said the astonishing thing. Whether she could see in what straits he was laboring he could not know, but she said, with difficulty:

"How kind you are!"

Kind! astonishing word to use to him who had begun with her in the worship of youth for youth and was now shocked into a sacrificial love that made him long to take her pain to wife, and live with it, bed and board, so she could be spared.

"Kind, my blessing?" he said. "Don't I love you? I'm not kind."

Then the nurse appeared, like a waft of wind, and seemed to take her away from him: for Amy closed

her eyes and withdrew into the prohibitive stillness of those ministrations.

Templeton got up and, with that softness he had learned, got out of the room and down the stairs. The house seemed very still. Sally was out for one of her little walks, and Elizabeth, he might have supposed, in the kitchen. But there she was in the hall below, waiting for him. She came forward noiselessly. Everybody in the house moved in a precautionary silence, as if they were living in a lambent atmosphere between sky and earth. It was bright enough, but it looked unsubstantial; and though they saw everything with a painful clearness, they seemed bound to touch nothing. She spoke with a grave composure, far removed from the mysterious or the fanciful.

"Mr. Templeton, may I see you a minute, please."

"Yes, of course." His mind, travelling back to Amy in an unsatisfied perplexity, recovered with a jolt. "Come into the library."

"No," said she. "If you're willing to step into the kitchen. Mother's gone for a little while, and I want to keep watch of the path. I can do it from there."

She held the door open for him and, as he made a motion to send her on before, flushed a little at her own ineptness in forgetting he would not accept the humility of her act, and passed on. The kitchen, once the dusty battleground of his everyday warfare, was beautifully changed. It was a temple worthily devoted to the household gods. There was the glow of copper and the blue of china, and the early bees hummed in the honeysuckle by the door. A beneficent place it seemed to him, and he turned to Elizabeth,

with gratitude, for she had made it so. Elizabeth was a creature of warm loveliness standing there in her blue dress, her hands clasped in front of her. She was bending slightly, like a suppliant.

"I've got to hurry, sir," she said. "Mother may come. Let me speak, but don't you answer me."

He nodded, his grave eyes attentively upon her. Was she going to break the wonderful atmosphere of the house, that serene helpfulness wrapped about Amy's wounded state like a protecting aura, by saying she was going away? Elizabeth, with a perfect composure, went on speaking. This was comparatively easy, for, in the night, while she swept Blaisdell's kitchen floor, she had thought out her course and decided how to put it to him.

"It's my mother, sir. She isn't right."

Templeton nodded.

"I know," he said, wishing he could save her further speech. He was remembering the night in the pines, and the man trolling his drunken song and Eunice miserably beside him. But this was not what he was to remember. He was to start from another point.

"It's her mind," said Elizabeth. If her voice thrilled, it did not seem to be from shame or irresolution. "My mother has lost her mind, as good as lost it. She thinks"—this was difficult, but she forged along —"she thinks all the time about people's being in love with people. About my being in love."

"Ah!" said Templeton. Mania, he thought. What was it they called it? And for this grave, steadfast creature to know and bear alone! "I think I see."

"She has an idea," said Elizabeth, "if I care about

people, menfolks, you know"—when she felt passionately, her speech was likely to go back to the common phrasing of her childhood—"she thinks I care about them that way. She might speak about it, sir. She might speak to you."

Still she was composed, though her breath came faster and his quick eye saw how she was controlling it.

"Never mind, child," he said, his warmth of pity embracing her. "Nobody could say anything about you that would make me think differently of you. I should tell her so."

"It isn't that," said Elizabeth. Her face flooded. Her task had grown harder, until now it was unbearable. He would not see, and her mind adored him for his foolish tardiness. "But, sir, if she thought I stayed here because"—here she broke and her rich voice trembled—"if it was you yourself I cared about, you wouldn't believe it. You'd let me stay."

The enormity of it struck him first. Templeton had no sexual vanity. He could not imagine that there was anything about him to appeal to women.

"Good God!" he said. "It's beyond belief. What do you want to do about it? Get away from here? You're the angel in the house, you and Sally, two bright angels. But if it's hard for you, you must go."

"That's it," she said. "That's what you'd be sure to say. But if we go, now you're in trouble, I shall die. Just don't listen to her. Let me stay."

He stood regarding her with his gravely considering eyes, thinking, in this new aspect of her, how fast she had developed into womanhood, how eloquent

her face had grown since she came to them a shy, awkward creature, at home only with her books.

"Yes," he said, "of course you'll stay, so far as we're concerned. But how about you? What is it going to do to you?"

"It isn't that so much," said Elizabeth. Her voice failed her a little. She sounded as if she had been running and used up her breath. "It's what it would do to me if I had to go. You see I know so well—"

She stopped here, unable to go on. Her mind was leaping ahead of anything she could possbily say, urging her to tell him what she had known of him, how she had seen his loneliness and rubbed the copper harder and made his house the more cleanly because of it. That was all she had been able to do, she who had been his handmaid all these weeks while his wife trailed back and forth from the city scarcely seeing him with her vacant eyes. Elizabeth could be sure his cup was filled and the house clean for his incoming feet. And now that grief was upon him for the actual withdrawal of the wife who had been as much withdrawn before, his handmaiden was doubly his. She wanted to dedicate herself, to serve the house if she might not seem to be serving him.

She went on with her clumsy tale.

"I know so well how help takes advantage, if it isn't looked after, and the house runs down. And I love"—she hesitated with the devil's whisper at her ear. But she had him down. She throttled him. No devil was going to wreck her life's wan happiness by tempting her to her own betrayal—"I love this house. If I go

away from it—" She stopped, in a pause that was not less eloquent for being unconsidered.

Templeton was profoundly touched. She loved his house, did she? He loved it, too, though in this black time he had not had the spirit to glance at it, save as it served Amy's needs or Sally's daily comfort. His heart melted within him. He put out his hand to her.

"No," said he, "you sha'n't go till you want to. And if your mother talks to me, I'll remember and try to make her see straight. Maybe I can't, maybe you can't. But make up to her, child. Let her see she's more to you than a regiment of men. If she looks into your eyes, she'll see you're as honest as the day."

He was looking into her eyes, seeing new things in their brown lustre: youth, the ignorance and following pain of youth, the terror of the long, long way before it. He still held out his hand, but she did not take it. She had a fantastic sense of honor about this talk of her own seeking. She had lied to him, and therefore she would not take his hand. She make a quick return to her usual manner.

"Mother's coming," she said. "Hurry, sir. She's almost at the door."

Templeton did go, to sit down at his table and think it over. It seemed to him a queer entanglement in the outer fringes of lives that scarcely touched his, except at casual encounters. Here was a creature of a nobility he prized profoundly, giving him of her best and now, by a woman's mania, involved in blatant foolishness. There were voices at the door, Sally

and Champ returning from their daily walk. Templeton heard Champ saying, in an unguarded tone:

"To-morrow then. Good-bye, my darling."

When Sally came in, he was so dumbfounded that his tongue betrayed him, and he asked:

"What the dickens was he calling you?"

Sally looked very little like a girl who has been called by such a name. She was fagged. Her heavy eyes told it, her languid movements when she dropped into a chair and took a book from the table without looking. The book was left on her knee, as if it gave her some sort of aid to composure. Her hand now turned a page or two, as if she were finding a place, but idly and without interest.

"Yes," she answered, in a voice as fagged as her look, "he called me that. Darling? Was that what you mean?"

If one trace of happiness had shown itself in her face, Templeton could have shouted out his approbation. If, while she trod the thorny way beside her mother and himself, she was cutting off into a by-path, the old blossomy way of perfect love, he could thank his dark gods for their brighter face. She said nothing more. She did not glance at him, but turned the pages of the book, and Templeton found that if he wanted to know, he must break his code and question her.

"Is it," said he, and heard in his voice a timidity he hoped she was enough herself to laugh at, "is it customary?"

Sally looked across the table at him, without much interest in his question.

"Is what customary?" she asked.

"That particular name, as applied to a young woman?" said Templeton meekly. "I mean, by young men who are not known by parents to have acquired the right so to apply."

"If you mean 'darling'," said Sally, "yes. He seems to have taken to calling me that lately. I can't stop him. I don't suppose I want to, really, or I could."

"Well," said Templeton, leaning back in his chair and taking courage from a certain softness of her tired face, "I suppose you may be announcing your engagement, but you'll have to tell me plainer than that. I'm old-fashioned, you see. I don't know the modern rites."

Sally shut the book, as if she shut into it her hesitations and her secretiveness, and laid it on the table.

"We're not engaged," said she. "Champ has asked me to marry him and I've said no."

"But," said Templeton warily, aware of a hurt under her defensive coldness, "you've said more than one thing to me, my Sally-o, that shows me you're in love. If he doesn't know it, you can tell him your father does."

"Oh, I've told him," said Sally. "But Champ's not in love with me. He loves me. Doesn't it sound like Marguerite?" she asked. " 'Loves me—loves me not!' Well, he loves me—and loves me not. Father!" Her voice was low, but to Templeton it seemed as if she called to him, and he half rose to take the step between them. Then he settled back in his chair and waited. "I'm a fool perhaps. Maybe even you'd say I am a fool. But there's a something, a madness, a loveliness, a worship, and I've got it for Champ and he never'll have it for me. And he's a poet, in his soul anyway, even if

he doesn't write a decent verse. And he ought to have a woman he could worship—don't you see? Worship her hands, worship her hair, her eyes. Look at my hands. Plain, good, serviceable hands. I'm a kind of mother to him, I'm not——" What she was not she could not say.

What to answer her? He did not know. Should he try to snatch her down from her romantic heaven? Yet she was only in that heaven because the poets took her there. She was really living there with them, and he knew, from his own abortive life, that youth had a right to its own madness, even if the lilies yellow and the roses dry into fragrance in a jar. But there was something to be said, some connection she had missed, and he must make it for her.

"Sally," said he, "love always ends in something commonplace."

"Yes," said Sally. "But it doesn't begin there."

"Aren't you willing to chance it, marry him and live it out, and see what comes of it?"

She answered without hesitation:

"Yes, if it were only me. But it's him. And the real one might come along, and I should be in the way."

"But doesn't he tell you," Templeton ventured, "how beautiful you are?"

"Oh, yes," said Sally lightly, still with her tinge of bitterness, "he says I'm lovely. But it's my soul he means." And she held up her serviceable right hand and looked at it, not disparagingly, but with interest.

"Well, God forgive you," said Templeton, "if you're going to throw a man over because he begins with your

soul. Most women would be glad if they could end with it."

"The fact of the matter is," said she practically, "I seem to understand Champ better than he understands himself. I've got a line on him, as they say. His mother's given it to me."

"Oh, no!" said Templeton. He loved to hear about her invisible playmates, but he abhorred the slightest hint of commerce between mortals and the departed dead. "O Lord, no! don't you muddle yourself up with that. If that's where your invisible business leads you, cut it out."

"No," said Sally steadily. "It isn't what you think. I don't mean I've had communications from Champ's mother; but I do seem to know what she was to him. I seem to know how she feels about it now."

"How does she feel?"

"I believe," said she slowly, as if this were evidence and must be thoughtfully given, "I believe she was the stronger spirit there, the head of the house, you know. She led, and they both followed. She planned big, picturesque charities, and Mr. Calvert quite loved his money, he had such a good time spending it. Then she died and the bottom fell out. They were like two children, do you see? Champ and his father. It doesn't make so much difference about Mr. Calvert. He's had his life."

Templeton smiled a little, with a sadness of his own. How often he heard that now: the old had had their lives. But did it make any difference when the spring had been cold and the granaries of autumn were unfilled?

"But with Champ," she said, "it's all to come. He adores beautiful things and he'd adore beautiful people, if he saw them; but he won't run with them when they leave his father out. And he's got into the set that girl runs with—Irene Renfrew."

Templeton did not hesitate.

"Look out, Sally," said he. "You're jealous."

She took it without a whimper.

"Why, yes," she said. "You don't have to be so awfully clever to see that. Of course I'm jealous. I'm bristling up and squawking because I see what they've done to him."

"But," her father ventured, "he doesn't have to train in that company. He's a free agent, Sally."

"No, he isn't," said Sally promptly. "He's a fool, he's a blundering, ridiculous darling boy, dying to make the world over and make himself over and not knowing how."

"But his mother? you've got away from her."

Sally looked grave and she said:

"His mother lived for him. She thought and planned for him. She'd better have turned him loose. You see, she had such an awful pull on those two. She never was very well, and they let her be the Queen Mother, partly to please her, I suppose. She was lovely. And she did know best. But she didn't leave them free."

"And here's my Sally, playing Queen Mother herself!"

"Father," said Sally, "if this were England, with estates and entail and long tradition and families that have to be faithful to it all, I'd marry him. If he were

a duke, I'd make him into the best duke that ever was and keep him from knowing what he'd lost in not having a beggar-maid he could adore. But he isn't a duke. He isn't a peer nor an M. P. He's a poet, really, and I'm not going to take his birthright away from him. I'm not going to let him marry a girl with serviceable hands and no kind of a nose. He's going to fall in love and break his heart if he wants to, but he's going to have the very last thing—the *dernier cri*—in worshiping somebody and thinking she's a goddess and he's a god, if it's only for a little while."

Said Templeton:

"He's bewitched you, hasn't he?"

She considered a moment, and her cheeks were red.

"Yes," said she. "I'm bewitched. And because I know how it feels, I want him to be."

She got up as if, having forgotten to be tired, she were entirely rested, went over and kissed him.

"You've taken his part," she said. "I love to have you. He hasn't many friends. He needs them badly."

Templeton, not venturing further, took her hand and put it against his cheek. He hoped he was telling it that he, at least, found it a lovely hand. Then his mind veered to Elizabeth, who also needed pondering over.

"Sally," he said, "do you think it's all right for Elizabeth to be here doing our work? She's a clever girl. Nice tastes, she has."

Sally bent on him a glance suddenly sharp and practical.

"No," she said, "I think it's very bad for her. I sup-

pose we should go to pot without her, but we'd better go, if it means keeping her here much longer."

"Really?" said Templeton, unexpectedly startled at the verdict he had courted. "She loves the house. She say so. Very touching I found it."

"Yes," said Sally, "but there's nothing in it for her here. I'd rather see her in a normal school teaching educational poppycock to other teachers that are going to teach it after her. I wish she'd never come here and I wish she'd go away. Yes, I know how heavenly she is to us; but send her off, if you can manage it. Send her off."

Templeton looked up at her, so at a loss that she laughed a little, sadly.

"Now what," he said, "precisely, do you mean?"

"I mean," said Sally, "you can't let a woman starve to death without sometime being sorry."

Upon this, she left the room.

XXXIX

Next day Templeton, in the library, was for the first time giving his mind to something unconnected with Amy. This was definitely business, a letter from his publishers preliminary to the July account, stating that, as sales were going now, they bade fair to offer him a big plum, and he was hereby urged to regard the practical side of his present popularity and turn in another book, for which they would send a contract. If they might suggest, it ought to be on the lines of his first work, which had been the object of such an amazing revival, only, if they might indicate the trend of it, taking into due account the complexity of life since the war. There was also an advanced psychology to be considered. But, and above all, it must be the satirist probing the common mind and, with his mastery of realism, turning it inside out for the public delectation.

Templeton read the letter twice, and then sat with it in his hand, thinking what a sham it all was, this irony of literature in the market-place. For the first time, he had become a safe business proposition: only he must manufacture exactly the brand of goods he had discarded. So only might he catch an awakened public. He had a patent, had he? and since some sharper workman might cut in with a salable imitation, he must set his manufactories going and turn out as much of his product as the market would absorb.

His smile deepened, for, he reflected, it had already happened. Pat had mulcted him of his beloved idea. It was quite innocently done and he had no doubt Pat would be quite willing to turn over a percentage on the plot, being a business man and probably an honest one. And he was in Pat's debt for the amazing hoax of the satirist business. Of course Pat had made a good thing out of launching the helpless satirist before the Women's Clubs; but there were the resultant royalties and it was the author himself who would reap the actual harvest. When you once began commercializing an art, there was no end to it. You could pay your mercantile debts by winking at the publicity that had made and damned you; but could you go on allowing yourself, by your own concurrence, to be damned? Certainly he had no more works to put forth of the type that were now so widely known as satires. He couldn't do it. He wouldn't if he could. And then, so inconsequent and so bizarre is this fabric we call life, he was conscious of a great relief over the advance news of his sales. It meant so many more luxuries for Amy. It promised leisure for him to sit beside her and try to answer that impenetrable gaze. If it were not by any means infinite riches, it would take them along a few years in their shipwrecked course, and after that they might somehow drop off into that other state, to be demonstrated, which is death. It was not that he did not propose to work again. He could and must do it, but at home. Doubtless he could get reviewing to do, and perhaps he might be more humble and push into the modern procession, viewing the landscape more sympatheti-

cally, taking its fiction not as what fiction ought to be but what it is. And then he smiled again, wholly at himself, quoting, "All that a man hath will he give for his life:" only it was Amy's broken life and not his own for which he meant to barter.

He glanced out of the window. A car had driven up, and a girl alighted. She was a complete little personage, and looked slightly familiar, but, at the moment of his placing her, Eunice appeared in the room. She came straight to him, and he saw she had come, as Elizabeth had foretold, to reason with him. Her face was set in an intensity of resolution he read and understood. Before this, he had noted only her flaming eyes. They had been so accusatory, so insistent, that they made her other features of no significance. But now they were a dark misery of doubt, of questioning, of wonder. What could she do, they asked, if she found the world about her as hostile as she feared?

"I should like," she said, "to speak to you."

It occurred to him that he must meet her, not as he always had, with a neighborly civility, but curtly, in the manner of a rightful superior. She must not come to him again. She must never bring him the diseased vaporings of her mind. The bell had rung. The girl was at the door.

"No," said he, as Eunice, disregarding the bell, not hearing it, indeed, stood with her eyes on his face, waiting for his permission to go on. "I can't see you now. If it's anything about supplies, my daughter will see to it. You mustn't feel that you can disturb me here. Some one is ringing. Go to the door and ask her in."

She looked at him for an instant as if she did not know him. Then her body drooped, with a desponding laxity and, without a word, she obeyed him and went to the door. A crisp voice was asking for him. He knew it now, and seeing the girl, he laughed. She fitted perfectly into his reflections of ten minutes ago. It was Maisie McGuire, the editorial other self of the leading magazine that had been, not many months ago, so relieved at the losing of him.

"Come in," said he, from the library doorway. "What brings you out here, where we're all commuters and you can see us any day in our swivel chairs?"

She laughed and entered, sat down, pulled off her hat and patted her hair. She was, he thought, as "thin as a match."

"Now," said he, "how do you girls manage to keep your skeletons outside?"

"You can ask your own daughter," said she. "You've got a daughter, I understand."

"Oh, Sally wouldn't know. She isn't thin."

"Is she thick?" asked the girl promptly, and he found Sally was being commiserated.

"Well, no," he said. "But she has to eat. She works, you see."

"I work, too," said she of the diaphanous slip and the roseate skin. "Gee! I should think I did. That's what I'm out here for. Our old man wants you to give him some stories, six, and name your price. Of course you and I know you won't get it; but you'll have the fun of naming it."

"Stories!" said Templeton. He cocked an eye at her and asked slyly: "Satirist vein? Same I used to write?"

She answered indirectly, and cocked an eye at him.

"Now I ask you," she said, "if you're not the one authentic confidence man of the literary market? How'd you work that game? Oh, yes, I know you didn't do it! 'Course it was your brother, but you stood in with him. How'd you do it,—sir?"

The last word she added as an afterthought, a concession to his antique traditions. After all, she wasn't here to offend him and really she didn't know him very well, though the crinkles about his eyes, at the moment, made her suspect there might be something rather sporting about Dear Old Templeton.

"Well," said he, "if it was a plant, you'll have to concede it was a grand one."

"Marvelous!" she said. "The other day it would have taken a college professor or two or the editor of a moribund religious paper to tell who J. Templeton was. You might have been resurrected in the Notes and Queries column. You know: the one where the dead return to life, for a minute or so when somebody gives a line of long ago and somebody else finishes it, out of her scrap-book. But now they're writing essays on you. The how-to-write-short-stories men are analysing you for the fall courses. How'd you do it, Mr. Templeton?"

"At any rate," said Templeton, still regarding her with a merry eye, "it's done. And I'm going to be rich, beyond the dreams of avarice. So you needn't come out here bribing me with your fiction-at-any-price. No! I'm through. That's what I told your boss. He wrote to me, you know. And if he thinks your bobbed hair and synthetic cheek—no, no, it isn't

a pun!—if he thinks they'll get round me, he's mistaken. Get thee behind me. Or no, stay to luncheon and then cut along home."

She sat looking at him, elbow on knee, chin in hand.

"I see what it is," said she.

"What what is?" he enquired.

"What makes 'em call you Dear Old Templeton. Really, Mr. Templeton, how do you feel about this sort of thing? how do you honestly feel? All this literary business, you know. Just what's it mean to you?"

The small face interrogating him was very business-like, very earnest in a fine way almost, he thought, in spite of its decorations, a noble way.

"For one thing," he said, "so far as I'm concerned personally, it means no thoroughfare, nothing doing. I'm a misfit. I don't fay into this present time when everything's standardised. To me, a literature that's standardised doesn't exist. You may earn your salary out of it and get into the pictures and buy a car—buy six cars, if you're lucky—but letters, art, creation by the written word! no, no, my girl!"

She still sat looking at him.

"Go on," she said. "Tell more."

"Want an interview?" Templeton asked, with lifted eyebrow.

"No, no!" said she impatiently. "I want to hear you talk, honest I do, Dear Old Templeton!"

But he had fallen off his high horse where he had careered for a minute, finding it fun to have her watch his caracoling. Now he thought of Amy upstairs, and the light failed and darkness settled upon his lot. He

passed a hand over his face to smooth out the tired muscles.

"No," he said, "I can't tell you anything you don't know. I'm a back number, and the world's going on without me. Stay to luncheon, and tell me how they're doing it abroad. They're writing some good verse there. Strange they can do it so much better than we!"

She had risen from her chair. No, she wouldn't stay to luncheon. He didn't really want her to, she told him, for she'd only pump him about what he thought things were coming to, and whether it wasn't just as well to be standardised if that was what folks wanted. Didn't it make for happiness now, if ten million people could write fiction instead of two or three and the rest of our hundred million or so having to stand by and admire 'em? Wasn't that democracy? Didn't democracy mean having a hand in the game?"

"Oh, democracy!" he said. "If that's what literature means, democracy!"

"I'll tell you what you are," she called to him from her taxi, "you're a Tory, that's what you are."

"I am," he called back at her. "I'm a Tory! I'm a Tory!"

"And I'm to tell my Exalted Head you'll be electrocuted before you'll write for him?"

He nodded violently, without speaking, lest Amy hear them and wonder; and the magazine Mercury drove away.

He stood a moment, looking after her. He had a strong conviction that, as he was paying his household charges out of this grotesque reputation as a satirist,

she, who had her bread and clothes to buy, and quite likely some clamoring family needs to satisfy, might know more about the sacredness of literature than she would own. Had she seen the light on the hills and come up from her country fastnesses, or miles on from the west, where they seem to breed a driving energy, to find the light was not sunrise but the glare of the lamps of industry? She too might have gone daffy over Pierian springs and the murmur of Castalian founts; but now she had thrown in her lot with the philistines who made even poetry a mechanism, not a madness, and if a man had the commercial luck to catch the ear of the numerical god that meant royalties, she was the Mercury who must fly to him on winged feet and bribe him to write more. He wished he had detained her, instead of packing her off so lightly. He wished he knew more of these young things who lived in this modern clangor as if they really believed mere speed and noise had a virtue of their own. He might ask Champ. And as if summoned, Champ came walking up to the door, though on no such business. He came straight into the library without the formality of asking.

"I wanted to see you, sir," he began.

"I wish to God," said Templeton irritably, "you wouldn't call me sir."

"I won't," said Champ genially. "Fact is, I thought you'd like it, and I wanted you to think me a little bit of all right, as our cousins say. I'd much rather call you Old Top, if you'd like it better."

"Much," said Templeton, recovering his good humor. "You see, you find me feeling particularly old

and out of the game. That nice girl you saw has just been here asking me to write stories, and she called me sir, too. Sally'll be doing it next."

"It's Sally I came about," said Champ. "What should you say to her marrying me?"

"Delighted," said Templeton promptly. "Only she won't, I understand."

"No," said Champ, "and that's the devil of it. Now, why won't she?"

But this Templeton thought Champ must be allowed to find out "by his learning," and he contented himself with saying:

"Sally is an incurable romanticist."

"Well," said Champ, "when it comes to that, so am I."

"Ah, but are you sure? Or do you express yourself in the lingo of the day? Do you, instead of begging my exacting daughter to drink to you only with her eyes, or the like of that, do you, for example, remark, 'I'm crazy about you,' which I understand to be the love note of to-day, and expect her to flute back: 'And I'm crazy about you'? I only ask, you know."

Champ was regarding him seriously.

"Old Top," he said, "I'm afraid you're kidding me."

"I'm not," said Templeton. "I give you my word. These be parlous matters, young man."

"Do you actually mean," said Champ, "she says——"

"I don't mean she says anything," Templeton hastened to assure him. "But my Sally—our Sally—I suppose she'll be yours ultimately—is a very special person and she's got to be kidnapped in a very special way."

"What way?" asked Champ.

Again Templeton mentally consigned him to the devil if he hadn't the sense to manage his own exits and entrances. Also, he had sobered, as the weight of this talk insisted on becoming evident, and he felt, with a new seriousness of his own, that it was an occasion for showing himself to be the head of his family. He had always held the reins of governance lightly. Often they had slipped from his hands altogether, and he did not miss their uncomfortable feel. Certainly he would never have attempted to coerce his wife in her least inclination, save perhaps when she, in her turn, wanted to coerce Sally, melt her up and pour her into a standardised mold. But as for his own sway over Sally, after the tender persuasiveness that stood for discipline in her blossoming youth, it simply had been allowed to lapse. If he had been asked if he did this in obedience to the rights of youth, tribute to its capacity for judging, he would have said: "Heavens, no! How should they judge, here on a strange planet where they don't know the rules? And if they're expected to bring with them some heavenly sort of intuition, to serve them instead of discipline, you're mistaken. They're just larvæ, as their fathers and mothers were before them."

But now he felt, as he had when Elizabeth made her sad appeal to him that, much as he hated to insist on his rights and privileges, he had to be the master of his house. He was drumming on the table with an impatient hand. Life was so mobile! It slipped so easily into new channels! You thought you were on a flowing stream that would take you on for the forever of your mortal days, and you looked up and the

flowers on the bank were all different, and the grasses were waving to another set of the wind. Also, he thought whimsically, the west was somehow nearer and the shadows getting long. But Champ sat looking at him, either framing another question or waiting on his mood. Templeton came to himself with a start. His drumming hand lay still.

"Is there any reason," he said, with a harshness proportioned to his distaste for having to show it, "why you shouldn't ask her? You haven't got another girl tied round your neck?"

Champ looked dark and ugly. He was thinking of Irene. Had he tied her round his neck? Hadn't she hung herself there by the suffocating tension of clinging arms? He got up from his chair.

"I know what you mean, of course," he said. He stopped, considering where he stood. Should he say: Irene Renfrew is over there at my father's house. She is there by her own act, not mine. How far, in a world where the license of behavior covers every untrammeled act, could one keep the code one saw as decent as well as reasonable? "No use, sir," he said. "I can't talk about it. But," he added, in a brief hopefulness, "Sally knows about it. I can talk with her."

And he was gone, presumably to do it.

XL

When Champ got home, he found Irene in a frock amazing in its nothingness, walking back and forth on the square of lawn outlined by the wide borders where later there would be banks of flowers. Now there were only the late peonies and early phlox; but the background of lilacs showed a steady green, and the girl, weaving back and forth, seemed like a butterfly born for a day of fluttering idleness. He crossed the turf to her and she waited for him, smiling, as he saw when he got near enough, her piteous smile. He was always being unjust to her, he thought. Her smile even made him irritable to the last degree. It seemed bent on pleasing him; and yet it was so wistful, so conciliatory, like the plea of a suppliant, that he could see behind it the terror born of her guilty deed. The terror never left her. She had indeed confessed to him brokenly that she often dreamed of being in prison and waking in terror when she was dragged out of it for—something, she did not know what. But she did know, he was perfectly aware. She had not only cast Amy Templeton to the wings of chance, but she had given herself such a shock, neither spiritual nor mental perhaps, but plainly physical, that she would find it hard to get back. As he approached her to-day, he thought despairingly how piteous she looked and how impossible he was finding it to avoid making her his responsibility.

He began with a dull commonplace.

"You're up early."

"Is there any change in her?" she asked, her mind on Amy Templeton.

He shook his head.

"Does she know?" Irene persisted. "Did she see me, do you think?"

He could answer with a clear conscience.

"She couldn't possibly have seen you. She must have been three or four feet beyond the wood road. It happened when you turned."

"Don't!" she cried, and flung out her hands.

Champ felt no answering mercy. He was always having these ruthless moments and then helplessly atoning for the hurt they gave her.

"If that's all you're worrying about," he said, "you can cut it out. I've told you before they won't even wonder who did it. If they suspected, they wouldn't follow it up."

"But they suspect," she said sharply. "I know by the way you speak. Is it Mr. Templeton?"

"No," said Champ, "it's Sally. She knows well enough."

"Then you told her. Oh, how could you!"

"It happens," said Champ, "that she told me. But you needn't be afraid. She's sorry for you. She sent you word you weren't to be unhappy. You weren't to think of it."

"This morning? You've seen her this morning?"

"Yes, I have seen her this morning, but her saying that was days ago."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was afraid it would make it harder for you. I've only told you now because you're pushing me."

"Oh," she cried, in her piercing voice, always sharper under the emotion he called up in her, "how unlucky I am! You give me away to a girl you're crazy about——"

Champ remembered Templeton's illustration of the liturgy of modern love and, in spite of himself, smiled a little.

"What are you laughing at?" she asked jealously.

"I'm not laughing," said Champ. "I was only thinking I'm not crazy about Sally. I only feel about her—" he stopped, wondering what the adequate answer would be, an answer that might seem fair to Sally in her character of an incurable romantic. He sought about in his own amused mind and took refuge with the poets. "I only regard her as the 'not impossible she,' the very 'button on fortune's cap.'"

"Does she—" Irene began, and hesitated, fearing the answer.

"No," said Champ, "she's not crazy about me, if that's what you want to know. She has a kind of benevolent interest in me. It's nothing that need move you to emulation. You couldn't possibly feel it for anybody."

Her lips quivered. She looked at him, fatuously, it seemed to him, saying:

"No, that sort of thing couldn't possibly trouble me. For that's not the way I think of you, Champ."

How did she think of him? He wondered if he

dared open before her the page of his life and hers where he could read item after item in the dreary study of her childish mind and his own unwilling answers. There were double columns in that unspoken auditing, and he was no more tolerant of his own record than of hers. It was a foolish piece of business, this visualised page of his, conclusions he cared nothing about now he had them; but he seemed never to get away from them because he could never escape the sense of his own accountability. She did not love him. She loved herself, and him only as he ministered to her. For she had the prevalent greed of life: the morbidly developed desire for emotion, the madness that culminates in sexual overthrow.

"Irene," he said, "we always get into a row. Why can't we call it off?"

"Call what off?" she interrupted fiercely.

"Everything," he said, "up to now. Our neighborhood feud, so to speak. My being so hateful to you—your—good heavens, child, don't you see there's nothing in it for you, staying here and having me knock you down and stamp on you about so often?"

She stopped him there.

"You've been very nice to me since I've been here," she said charmingly, and Champ could not reply. The code of hospitality had, he thought, its drawbacks.

"There's my father," he said, "What's he look so important for, with that letter in his hand? That's the way I feel when I get an acceptance from a magazine."

Stephen was coming along with a distinctly consequential air, and he did hold an open letter. He

looked proud of himself and also a little frightened, pointedly ignoring Champ and addressing himself, with a kind of false gaiety, to Irene.

"It's all right, my dear," he said. "I've written to your mother and asked her to make us a visit. She'll stay as long as you do and have an eye on you. Your dear mother saw the necessity for doing so. She very kindly accepts."

Irene did not reply. She stood looking at him in a stricken way, dropped her folded hands at her side and walked off over the grass. Champ, after a moment of watching the little figure, went after her.

"Don't take it like that, Irene," he said. "Don't you see he's done the right thing? I ought to have thought of it myself. You can't stay here with us without being—why, we've been ridiculous, all of us. Don't you see we have?"

"I'll 'phone her," said Irene quietly. "She may be here, if I don't. Have out my car, will you? I sha'n't be long."

"Now, what the devil!"

A disconcerting picture of her rose before his harassed mind; was she rushing off to a spectacular death to punish him, to punish all of them? But if she were going, he thought, with a great lifting of the spirits, he would go with her and take her home.

In twenty minutes she was down at the door. She had not changed her dress, and her head was bare. Old Stephen, to whom neither of them had spoken since the disclosure of his little plot, stood uneasily waiting on the steps, and she went up to him and put out her hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Calvert," she said prettily. "You've been very good to me. Good-bye."

Champ opened the door for her. She got in, and he went round to the wheel. She was smiling slightly at Old Stephen, and vouchsafed a little waving hand. He stood looking after them, his firm mouth relaxed by the dropping of his jaw. If she meant to punish him, she was doing it very well.

Champ drove on, and was glad the road home took them away from the Calvert woods. But there were other woods, after a couple of miles, and when they had entered the shade of them she touched his arm.

"Stop," she said. "I've got to talk to you."

He stopped under a great yellow birch, its trunk a knotted mass of shining bark. It was on his father's land, and he loved it, and kept his eyes fixed on it now, hoping he could keep his mind on it sanely, whatever she might say. She began speaking, and this was again the sharp, high voice, broken as she went on.

"Champ, what's it all about?"

"This?" he said. "My taking you home? Why, dear girl, you mustn't blame him. He did the only thing possible. He saw further than you or I. Your mother sees it, too. You're sick, child. Your mother knows that. She must be worrying no end."

"Am I truly sick?" she asked piteously. "Champ, is it my mind? Am I insane?"

"Good God, no!" he said. "But it's your racketing round." ("And following after strange gods," he wanted to add, but knew she would not understand.) "And it's the thing you did. That's been a tremendous shock to you. It's knocked you out."

"Champ," she said, "I can't be anywhere but with you. Will you take me somewhere so we can talk quietly? No! no!" He had glanced round at her and she saw refusal in his eyes. "We won't talk: just sit still and hear the leaves move, and I can have a few hours more before I get out of it all for good. You needn't scowl. I shall get out of it. You think I was a coward before, but it was all so sudden, seeing the bank and knowing I was going over. This time I shall be prepared."

Champ sat still for a moment, thinking. Then he began to back the car.

"Where are you going?" said Irene. "If you're taking me anywhere I don't want to go, I'll jump."

He threw an arm about her and kept on turning. Feeling his arm she did not resist it, but swayed closer to him and sat so while he drove back over the way they had come. When they reached his own driveway, she evidently expected him to turn in; but he did not and she settled down again and he went on to Red House and drew up before it. There they sat, his arm about her, and she asked:

"What are we here for?"

"If I get out and go to the door, will you promise to wait?" he asked. "No," he added, "I couldn't trust you. We'll sit here and see what comes of it."

So they waited, she apparently in a double fear, of what the house meant to her and of him. Once she said, in a frightened voice:

"What are you going to do with me?"

He hardly heard her. What he wanted was Templeton, the man, he now knew, he loved best in the world

and the man whose higher faculties he trusted. Also it was Templeton whom her madness had most vilely wronged, and he had a feeling that if the thing were clear between them, if she could see Templeton and he could learn it was her carelessness that had wrecked Amy's life—for that it was carelessness he meant to insist—they would be on solid ground. She would have to give up her nightmares of terror; Templeton would see to it that she did. His very atmosphere was enough. He was as natural as the earth; and even his anger would be a tonic more helpful than unsubstantial fears.

He hoped somebody would see them and come out, and meantime he was sitting there in the absurdity of that detaining arm. Release her and she would be off like a thistledown and he could hardly run after her and hale her back. He hoped it would not be Sally who came. But it was Sally and Templeton both. Sally had seen them. There was no doubt that she did have a sense of things happening; she had been busy in the back of the house but something drew her to a window, and she saw Champ waiting. She had had no anger against Irene, but the sight of the snuggling figure brought her heart into her throat. She had to go out there, but she felt foolishly unequal to going alone, and ran in to her father who was at the library table, doing his column doggedly. He looked up and then, moved by her face, got out of his chair, to run upstairs to Amy. Sally stopped him, by a hand on his arm.

"Champ is out there," she said, "with Irene Ren-

frew. He's brought her. We've got to go out. It was she that ran down mother—no, no, darling, don't mind! don't mind! It's done. It's over. It had to be. Champ will try to make us believe it was carelessness, but it wasn't. It was some deviltry of hers, wanting to drive through the woods because it bothered him. You and I must keep that in our minds. There's something deeper in it than carelessness, and he's found he can't manage her and he's brought her to us. Don't let's fail him. You mustn't fail him, father."

Templeton saw she had no apprehension of her own failure.

"Well," he answered, "we'll go out and see what we're in for. But why," he added, as they went down the steps, "don't they come in and say what they have to say?"

"He probably couldn't," she answered hurriedly, for they were walking fast toward the car. "Perhaps she wouldn't come. Perhaps he felt he couldn't take her into your house, mother's house, you see. Yes, Champ would feel that."

They had reached the car and they stopped beside it, and, for a moment, no one seemed to think of speaking. It was Irene who spoke first. Champ had withdrawn his fettering arm, because it seemed unlikely that she would jump out, with three of them looking on. To Templeton and Sally she looked small and shrunken, with a somewhat weazened face, destitute of the bravado of red and white it had worn the night they saw her first. This was in tribute to Old Stephen.

She had discarded her rouge and lip-stick in deference to what she judged to be his prejudices. She had wanted Old Stephen to like her, and it was an additional hurt that it was he who was sending her home. She looked at Templeton, and her gaze wavered a little but still held. He was an old man, it seemed to her, but one you couldn't get away from. She dreaded him, but she had to speak.

"I was afraid," she faltered. "I came out of the woods in high because I meant to go over the bank. And when I saw the bank, I was afraid. But I didn't see anybody in the road."

She looked so withered up with suffering that Templeton wished to heaven she had not come on her unspeakable errand. You could apologise for wrecking property, but not a woman's life. It seemed to put a queer, mad face on tragedy. You killed a woman, and came to make a call. But Champ and Sally knew more than he about her state of mind. To them it was a chaos of abject fears.

"I have told her," said he, to Templeton, "that if you saw her, you'd understand. The amount of it is, she's just gone to pieces over this."

A part only of her confession had remained in Templeton's mind, and he wanted to examine it more fully. He came a step nearer and said to her, speaking rather intimately, as if they two were alone:

"You said you wanted to go over the bank. What do you mean by that?"

"I wanted to," she reiterated. "I had to. I wasn't happy."

"What have you to complain of?" he asked her, in a voice so hard with anger that Champ glanced quickly at him and then looked away, and Sally involuntarily moved nearer. "You're young. You've got life before you. And you're such a vain fool you haven't the least idea what it all means. Somebody's refused you something, and you're a hurt baby, throwing away your playthings. You, a small, insignificant atom! you had the power to destroy life, to cause an amount of suffering you couldn't understand to save your soul. I suppose it would have been better for you and everybody if you had gone over the bank. You'll live to be married and the mother of sons and daughters. Good God! what is the world coming to in the hands of imbeciles like you?"

She crouched nearer Champ and began a low whimpering; but this stopped, as Templeton went on, because, if it had been fright before, she was palsied with it now. He had another word or two for her.

"Go home," he said. "If you've got a church, do penance in it. So far as we are concerned, my daughter here and I, you are perfectly safe. Nobody will know about it from us. But go home and make a woman of yourself, if you can. Is there anything else?"

This he threw at Champ, who did not answer, but made a little movement of the shoulders indicating he would go on when they stepped out of the way. Sally put a hand on her father's arm and he stared, as if he saw her for the first time, and did stand back with her, and Champ went along, to turn further on. But

when he came back, the two were still there, and Templeton put up a hand for him to stop. He pulled up, and Templeton hurried forward to the car, and again Irene gave him that frightened glance and cowered against Champ. Tears were in Templeton's eyes. He put his hand over Irene's, as it lay in her lap.

"My dear," he said, "I don't know quite what I said to you. It's all true, I'm pretty sure, but probably I shouldn't have said it. You're all I called you, a little fool, light as ashes, and vain. The fools are always vain. And because you're young and the earth belongs to youth, you've been given a power, for a minute, over life and death. But it's only for a minute. Remember, child, it's only for a minute. And light as you are and fool as you are, you can lay up for yourself everlasting misery. And for us, for the rest of us you meddle with—and we're fools, too, in our own way—everlasting grief. But there's nothing that can't be turned from evil into good. You're a fool, and so you're evil. But you can be good. You can be good, child, good. Do you hear me? Say your prayers. Say, 'God make me good.' And I'll say mine, and ask Him to forgive me for putting a knife into you. There, Champ, go along. If I stand here, I shall stick the knife in deeper and turn it round."

Champ needed no further leave to withdraw. He started up, without another look, and Templeton, Sally beside him, turned back to the house. Midway up the path, Templeton passed a hand across his forehead. He could not remember being angry for—how many years? It was a sickening madness, he thought, again the madness of a fool.

"Sally," said he, "what made her want to kill herself? notoriety? they all want that."

Sally knew precisely why Irene had wanted to kill herself, but she did not feel it necessary to tell her father everything.

"We can put it at that," she said. "It's near enough."

"Did I forgive her?" he asked vaguely, thinking back over his onslaught. "I suppose that's what her coming meant. She was afraid, and she wanted to be assured we wouldn't make it harder for her. Did I forgive her so she'd get it through her empty head?"

"I should think so," said Sally discreetly. "I got it through mine."

Champ drove rapidly on, and Irene did not speak again until the car stopped before her door and her mother appeared on the moment, as if she had been looking for them.

"Your father telephoned," she said to Champ.

She came down the steps and, when Irene stepped out, gave a little smoothing touch to the pretty dress, as if she had to indicate a caressing welcome and dared venture nothing more. Champ, hat in hand, stood beside them for a moment and talked foolishly. Irene was a little under the weather, he took it upon himself to explain. But she'd pick up in short order.

"Sha'n't you, Irene?" he challenged her.

She did not answer. She stood looking at him with frightened eyes that seemed to beg him not to leave her. He wondered if he dared. But could he settle down upon Mrs. Renfrew's hospitality as Irene had settled upon his father's, simply because Irene was frightened? Sally, he believed, could decide these

things out of hand, but Sally had her own work before her in the house Irene had made a battlefield, and Irene must take up her own life and carry it. And so must he.

"Come along, child," said Mrs. Renfrew, in the voice of a fictitious cheerfulness. "If Champney really won't come in!"

He went to Irene and took her unsteady hands.

"Will you promise me something?" he said.

"Yes," she breathed, not much above a whisper.

"Then here it is. You'll see a doctor. You'll tell him you're played out. You needn't tell him why. And you'll do whatever he orders. And when you've got into shape, you'll let me know. Anyhow, I'll 'phone you every day and see how you are."

"Will you really?" she asked. "Shall I hear your voice?"

"Of course I shall," said Champ. "And unless the line is out of order, of course you'll hear my voice."

"And Champ!" he was going, but she put out one of her freed hands and held his sleeve. "Is it Sally? I won't do anything wrong. I won't kill myself. That would spoil it all for you. But you ought to tell me. Is it Sally?"

He thought an instant. Should he put her off because she was so shaken in her unstable mind? Or should he, like Templeton, demand the best of her by answering truly?

"Yes," he said. "So far as I'm concerned, it's Sally. Remember, you're to telephone."

Then he was really gone, and she followed her mother into the house.

Her heart, she felt, was broken. But from force of habit in an emergency, she took out her vanity case and powdered her nose. For Old Stephen was no longer there.

XLI

When did Eunice and Elizabeth sleep? This was what Enoch wondered, for he had not been long in finding out that they were away every night, from eleven to one or two. News came to him of itself, as if there were active messengers, running to him with tidings. He was not surprised when this perennially wakeful news station of his mind called him to find Eunice slipping forth in all weathers; but on the first night of seeing Elizabeth with her, he was dumfounded. What was the girl going for? how had her mother allowed her to go? The temptation was strong upon him to follow them and see where they went, but indeed it was scarcely a temptation: only a suggestion of the under-mind which is earthy and without morals or taste. Enoch had the finest of feelings toward them. Always they were to him "nice folks."

It was the night after Elizabeth's finding her mother in Blaisdell's house that she appeared beside her, when Eunice was going out, a basket of food in her hand, and said composedly:

"You'd better let me carry the basket."

Eunice stopped, and looked at her through the dark.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Where do you think you're goin'?"

Her voice was smothered, not from anger but the despair of finding herself trapped.

"Where we were last night," said Elizabeth calmly. "We can do it quicker, both of us together; then we can get home. You need your sleep."

Eunice stood for a moment, thinking.

"All right then," she said. "If it's got to be, it must." But she would not give up the basket on her arm.

Neither of them spoke further until they came to the house and Eunice reached for the stone beside the step, lifted it and put down her hand for the key. She took it out and stood there a moment, holding it.

"I don't s'pose," she said, "there's anything under God's heaven will keep you from comin' in here now you've made up your mind to come."

"No," said Elizabeth. "I want you to get to bed early. Come, unlock the door."

Eunice, with a little sighing sound, did unlock it and they went in, and from the moment of getting the kitchen light they moved about together with the quick efficiency of trained hands and according minds. At first, Eunice gave brief instruction now and then, as to where this or that was to be found, and Elizabeth worked with an absorption her mother could not help regarding with maternal pride. She was a smart girl, Eunice reflected. Her book learning hadn't spoiled her for these more important things. Too bad she hadn't married. Too bad—but there something sleeping in her, something she tried never to waken, seemed to be laughing at her, and bidding her remember her own married life. Perhaps the child was better off as she was. "We never know what's before us," she muttered to herself. And now her mind veered to her

angry suspicion of Templeton's effect on the girl, and her own despairing relation to Blaisdell dropped upon her like a suffocating web woven of sombre colors, and she groaned over her tasks. The first time she did it, Elizabeth, who was dusting in the next room, heard, and came hurrying to her.

"What is it?" she asked. "You hurt you somehow?"

She seemed so kind that Eunice felt like throwing down her broom and leaning on her tall daughter, for a moment, only a moment, to rest against something warm and human. She did not go far as to think Elizabeth might take her into protecting arms. Nobody would do that, except the man for whose comfort she was working so fast this hot July night, and that was wicked, wicked, she told herself—only he was the only one that was kind. She had never ceased to think she was wicked; but she had stopped talking about it to him, because it made him half bored, half angry, to hear her one penitential lament, "You're a married man." The Elizabeth working here beside her seemed to her an amazing stranger, not offended, not contemptuous of her, but silently helpful so that they could get home to bed. Another doubt began to gnaw at her. It was relief unspeakable to have Elizabeth recognise her right to this illicit service, but a jealous pang struck her when she thought it might mean that Elizabeth herself was not the same. Much as she might revolt under her daughter's rigid standards, she kept a flaming pride in the standards themselves. Did it mean that Elizabeth, in her new phase of unlicensed love, understood her the better and had taken a step down from her moral eminence? If that

were so, she would rather her daughter hated her than stand beside her on a lower plane.

When they went home, she was more tired than she had ever been on the nights when she worked longer, but alone. Then she could move about in freedom, her mind solaced by doing for him, her hands caressing the dumb servitors he touched. When Elizabeth crowded in upon her, everything was different. There was truce between them, but their minds were battling in the silence. For ten nights, the unspoken warfare lasted: Blaisdell's house was clean and his table spread. On the eleventh, Elizabeth walked dispiritedly to her task. She was sick of it; her mind and body were one in lassitude. When they reached the door, her mother put her hand down for the key, and seemed to fumble.

"It ain't there," said she. Her voice had a quickened note, surprise, it might be, or pleasure. She tried the door and shook it. "Maybe he's come home."

Certainly, thought Elizabeth, she was pleased. For herself, she felt no longer tired. A great anger rose in her. She had been able to bear this hateful intimacy with the house; but if the man himself were here, the thing must end.

"Come home," she said, a fierce whisper at her mother's ear. "Quick, before anybody knows."

Even in her haste, she could not refer to him more particularly, and certainly she would not pronounce his hated name. Eunice stood as still as a tree. She was thinking. She, too, supposed he was there, but her queer mind would not let her enter. She could kiss him in the open, under the sky that saw everything, but she would not voluntarily meet him within

walls. Certainly she would not let Elizabeth. But there was a tumultuous delight in feeling he was there. The house itself was more friendly in its neatness which was the work of her hands. Suddenly, as she stood there for that instant of ungoverned thought, there was a sound from above. A window was thrown up, and a woman called:

"That you?" They did not answer. "Who's there?" came the voice.

Elizabeth stood like a stone. It was so unexpected that she, too, felt the folly of their being there. Eunice, recovering first, took her by the arm.

"Come round the side o' the house," she whispered. "There's a path 'cross lots. If we went straight down to the road she'd see us, an' it would be in everybody's mouth."

Elizabeth let herself be guided, and they slipped round the corner of the house and into the orchard, and there her mother, though the dark bulk of the spreading trees shadowed the ground, made her way cleverly. Elizabeth thought afterward that where she herself stumbled, or had to be pulled back when a tree barred the way, her mother seemed to have eyes in the dark. Presently they stepped over a low stone wall and were in the road again. Eunice went fast, and Elizabeth, no longer tired, kept abreast of her. Under the first maple tree outside the yard, Eunice put out a hand and took a fold of Elizabeth's sleeve, to signal her. They stopped, and Eunice whispered:

"You go in an' go to bed. I've got somethin' to do an' it's somethin' that's my own concern an' nobody's else. If you follow me——"

She did not put this as implying a threat, but a piteous entreaty, and Elizabeth was afraid to question it. Yet, could she leave her? She remembered country tragedies she had known: how women in despair killed themselves in hideous ways, drowning, stabbing themselves with a knife they might have used for years in daily household service. Her mother was crazed over the other woman's presence in Blaisdell's house, and what might she not do? So when Eunice dropped the fold of her sleeve and turned away, Elizabeth put an arm about her and held her close.

"Don't go," she found herself saying. "If it's something you want, tell me and I'll get it for you. Only I can't let you go alone. In all this dark!" she added, as if she had never seen the country night.

Eunice was beside herself with the pain of her frustration.

"Well," she said sharply, "I'll tell you what I want. I want to go down to the old locust an' see if there's a letter."

Elizabeth did not take her arm away: she moved forward and drew her mother with her.

"Yes," she said gently. "Let me go too. If there is, I'll get it for you. My arm's longer'n yours, and I've got on my old dress."

Eunice yielded, not knowing any other way, and they went on down to the tree and Elizabeth plunged her arm into the dark hollow of it.

"Here it is," she said. "You take it. My hand's all over tree mold, and I suppose the letter is, too. Come, now. We'll go up to the house and get a light, and you can read it."

Eunice took the letter, and they went back to the house. She was stricken with wonder. Elizabeth had assumed command of her, not as an angry judge, but like a mother who knew what ways were best. In the peaceful dusk of their own kitchen, Elizabeth lighted a lamp and set it on the table.

"There," said she. "Now you can see. I guess I'll wash my hands."

She did wash them, at the sink, but not so much from the tree mold as to get hold of herself through some simple action. Eunice took a kitchen knife and slit the letter open. She could never tear an envelope he had sealed. Even they were precious to her. She read the one page, read it again, and laid it on the table and stood there looking at it, as if it had hurt her and she had to watch it lest it stab at her again. She was so still that Elizabeth, wiping her hands, and making it a long process because she had resolved to leave her mother free to read, turned and looked at her. Eunice stood there, one hand on the back of a chair, supporting herself rigidly. She was staring at the letter. Elizabeth hurried to her, and her mother looked up at her, with a wan smile.

"It's over," she said.

Elizabeth was not her judge now, but only something that breathed with human breath, and she had to lean on it to assure herself that she also was human, on a solid earth. Elizabeth put an arm about her.

"Yes," said her mother quietly. "You can read it, if you want to."

Elizabeth took it from her and read. It was a scrawl she would once have despised, but now she had to

absorb it into her very heart to compass its full meaning.

"She has come back," he said. "She is different. She's been coming every night when I'm not here. Cleaning up. I thought first it was you, but I asked her and she owned up. We are going away from here. She's better than I thought. Good-bye."

Elizabeth did not fully understand.

"He thought it was his wife?" she said. "And she let him think so? But it's brought him back to her."

"Yes," said Eunice bitterly, "it's brought him back."

"But," said Elizabeth, getting the full bearing of it, "you're not sorry?"

Eunice could answer without reservation. Elizabeth was still merely a human creature standing there in the night beside her, something to listen with human understanding and break the unmindful silence with human words.

"Don't you see," she asked, out of her blank misery, "what the upshot's goin' to be? She may lie to him, this first go, but it won't last. She's a good-for-nothin'. She'll go back to what she was."

"That," said Elizabeth, coldly now, "is not our business."

"It's mine," Eunice declared fiercely. "If you'd seen anybody deserted an' his house goin' to rack an' ruin, an' her ridin' around the country with another man, an' he's threw her over an' that's why she's come back, should you think that wa'n't your business, if you could help it?"

"You can't help it," said Elizabeth, still coldly. "You ought not to want to."

Her former aloofness was upon her again, what her mother, in the only moments of actual anger she had against her, called her school-teacher manner.

"Look here," said Eunice, "don't you know what it is to work for a man that's got a wife that's no good to him, an' don't you do everything in the world you can to help him out? An' if he'd have you, wouldn't you put your arms round his neck an' tell him how you felt towards him? My God in heaven! I b'lieve you would."

And whether she were most overthrown by her belief that she and Elizabeth were one in their desires, or by her sorrow that the little Elizabeth she had known had been smeared by the knowledge of life, she could not have told.

Elizabeth was not, to her own surprise, angry. It was true, she thought. She did love Templeton. But he was her god, not a man she wanted to possess. If it came to keeping his house decent for him, she would sacrifice anything to do it, even what she used to call the intellectual life. One thing she knew. She and her mother must talk this out now, while Eunice was beside herself to the point of finding words, or it could not be done at all.

"Never mind me," she said. "I can take care of myself."

"I can take care of myself, too," said Eunice, and ended wildly, "It's easy enough when anybody tells you it's good-bye."

If Elizabeth was the more aloof from her with every word, she did compassionate her physical overthrow.

"Sit down," she said. "Let's both sit down and talk a little. We can't sleep."

"Oh!" said Eunice impatiently, "what's the use of talkin'? Besides, Enoch'll hear us an' be down."

"He can't hear us," said Elizabeth, staring.

"He does hear," said her mother. "If he don't with his ears, he does with his mind. In a minute more, he'll be standin' on that door-sill in his stockin' feet. You'll see."

"Then," said Elizabeth, "go into your bedroom and I'll come, too. Pick up the letter. Don't leave it here. Unless you'll let me burn it. Don't you want me to?"

Eunice caught it up from the table and folded it. With it still in her hand, she went into her bedroom. After a minute's thought, Elizabeth followed and found her lying on the bed, her arm extended starkly and the hand hanging over the edge. Her eyes were closed, and she opened them for a moment, to say:

"You can go to bed. It's over an' done with. There's no more to say."

Elizabeth could not leave her. She drew the one chair to the side of the bed and sat down. It was a straight kitchen chair, and its simple lines fitted the bareness of the one-windowed room. It was the room where she herself was born, and where her small cot had stood until she grew big enough to go into the chamber above, and it seemed to her now that these walls were as strange to her as the unknown boundaries of her mother's mind. Eunice, seeing that she elected to stay, opened her eyes again and looked at her in a dull interrogation.

"What makes you hang round here?" she asked.

"You've got no use for the place nor me neither. Unless you're goin' to tie yourself hand an' foot to that house over there, an' put your learnin' into washin' his dishes an' makin' him cake. But you look on me an' take warnin'. There's nothin' in it, nothin'."

She closed her eyes and two tears ran down her cheeks. It might be that, after a lifetime of acquiescence, she was ready to pour out the accumulated discontent of her imprisoned mind. But Elizabeth could see no way of shedding light on the poor darkened mind. She remembered how Templeton had urged upon her the need of at least making a pretense of love she might not feel: but how was she to do it? She and her mother were both unpractised in the usages of an intercourse between mother and child as unthinking in its commonest aspects as warmth from the shielding breast feathers of the mother bird. She felt defrauded. Because she could not love her mother enough to say she loved her, she seemed to have been balked of her own natal rights. She must say something before she left the stricken woman; but the few words she found seemed to be wrenched from her in a way that made speech itself a pain:

"I'll do anything for you, if you'll only go off with me and leave all this behind."

"Go away?" Eunice repeated incredulously. "With you? You wouldn't go away with me. You're ashamed of me."

"I'm not ashamed of anything," said Elizabeth, with bursting heart, "except watching you to see you don't do wrong. And having you watch me. I came home to watch you. I heard what was going on, and I gave up

my school and came. You hate me for coming and for watching you. I don't blame you. It's horrible to be watched."

Eunice was regarding her with solemn, asking eyes. It began to seem to her as if the little Elizabeth still lived in the tall creature who was the censor of morals and manners in these confining walls. So Elizabeth, too, had learned that it was horrible to be watched!

"Yes, dear," she said, "it's awful to be watched. But I had to do it. You know about books, but I never thought you knew much else. And when you take a fancy to anybody, you don't see how far it will lead you an' if he ain't a good man——"

"He is good," cried Elizabeth, losing all sense of expediency. "And I'm no more to him than the dust under his feet. You'd have to live a thousand years"— She was about to throw a light, if she could, on that dear upland her mother had never entered and never could enter now, because life had bound her in a narrow mold and she was hardened there, but where Templeton lived and his kind, peers of the men who were the pillars of the world. And how poor were they who could not enter there! She had herself looked in and seen the colonnaded spaces and men pacing them, men like Templeton, and she was rich in that mere childish glance. But she could never join them, for if she turned her back on this room where she came into being, she would be a renegade and a deserter. After this certainty had shot, like a hot arrow, through her brain she was able, with scarcely a pause to finish her sentence, and now it plausibly ran: "You'd live a thousand years before you saw anybody as good as he is."

Eunice raised herself on one elbow, sat up on the bed and began to take out the pins that held her heavy hair.

"You go up chamber," she said, "an' get your clothes off. You need your rest. I guess we both do."

Her voice sounded infinitely pathetic, and Elizabeth, looking at her heavy eyes, judged she was too spiritless and weak to do any despairing deed that night. What to say to her? Could she release the cry in her own heart:

"Love me! make me love you!"

It was not possible, and she rose from the chair and was about to leave the room with not even a good night. At the door, she stopped. Not only was she going, starved and desolate, but she was leaving her mother more impoverished still. She turned back to the gaunt figure now standing by the bed, and fell upon it in a fury of contrition, longing to take it in her arms, kiss the trembling lips and break into words that would sound loving, though they need not be true. Instead, she began braiding the thick dark hair hanging down her mother's back, and then, while Eunice stood wondering, unhooked her dress and took it off, went on undressing her as if she were a child and slipped on her nightgown. She turned back the bedclothes and said, in a voice shaken by grief, whether for herself or for her mother she could not have told:

"Don't you know how you used to do it for me?"

Eunice did not answer, but gave a little moan.

"I do," said Elizabeth, passionately, as if her mother had accused her of being the one to have forgotten. "I do remember. Now you go to sleep."

XLII

It was June of the second summer, and Amy had not come back. She was gently acquiescent, and no one knew whether she suffered from weariness only or the bitterer pangs of hope deferred. In answer to the doctor's questions, she said she had no pain; but this they doubted. Templeton could never bear to have her asked, even for their just reasons. He felt she had a right to accept the indignity of her condition in the way that seemed best to her, to fight it out toward a despairing end, if she could, or endure it when she must. He lived, as he told Sally he meant to do henceforth, out of his green bag. It was, he said, like the fakir's begging bowl. He carried it in town and brought it back again filled with books for review and notes for the editing of certain works of great dulness and value where his long technical training made him serviceable. He indexed, he read manuscripts for publishers, he raked in the frugal dollar wherever he saw it lying. For he had known from the first that the Templeton boom could not last. It had brought him in a tidy sum, but the public mind had turned to other, newer asteroids in the sky of publicity, and though he would always be regarded with a respectful recognition, readers of a date later than a year after the rising of his trembling light above the horizon would have been put to it to tell precisely what it was he had

become noted for. And then, casting about for some new source of income, it occurred to him that he would do even as his boosters had declared him to have done. He would better their instructions. They had named him and then pelted him with the name. Through them alone, he was a satirist. Go to, now! he would straightway become one, and the victim of his satire should be himself. He would write a book telling how a man of his age grew to despise the work he had been doing and aspired to glorious opportunity, how he had, thus late in life, made the choice that can perhaps be made adequately only in youth. The man threw down his gods of clay and set up an altar to the gods themselves, the ones that can without sacrilege be called gods. He starved and thirsted and kept vigil, all to the end of doing the work that never pays: because it seems as if the little gods are jealous when they see it doing, and steal away a man's money luck. And after he had lived bare for a time and drunk daily the austerity that attends on noble tasks, suddenly the earth had him again, and he craved money—not for himself, it is true, but for the wife and children he loved better than himself—and he went back into the market-place and sold himself for hire. Other men were doing the cheap and futile thing. He would do it with them. Other men were crying their wares in unabashed voices. He would cry louder than they. And he did cry louder, and when he died and was buried, he was laid under a monument of best sellers, and his guardian angel before flying away and leaving the spot to the obscuring power of time, set fire to them and even they were

forgotten. And this was the satire upon his own life set down in exclamatory prose of the sort prevailing at the present day. It was a story and it was told in the language of the time; but it had, though it laughed all through, with the laughter of the man who jeers as he writes, the hidden bitterness of a man who sees himself completing his cycle, born of the earth and briefly regnant over it, catching then the breath of a higher air and rising upward in the futile desire to live among the stars, and then falling, returning, with his own dust, to the earth. And this was life, and this was man. The cycle was complete.

When he finished it, he knew it was, by the standards of the market-place, rather good. Few, perhaps nobody, would detect the hidden bitterness or, on the other hand, guess that it had been written out of a flat desire to put money in his purse, so that Amy, at the end, when his plodding talent no longer functioned, should be safe. And it was, he could not help seeing, tinctured by his old, and what seemed then lovely idea of escape, man's spirit flying upward and the earth getting him at last. But this he did not dare think very much about: for it seemed to hint that the spring of imagination within him had dried up, and he could only return to a version of something previously conceived.

He took the manuscript in to his publisher and was welcomed warmly.

"Satire?" enquired the head of the firm, with the assurance of the man who has learned to standardize the thing warranted to sell.

"Satire!" returned Templeton, with an equal nonchalance. And then it occurred to him that he didn't want to leave it, after all. That one word was like a little window and he saw light. Satire! his old editor had asked him over and over again for some stories in his former vein now so happily popular. He would take it in there. It should be serialized and its popularity thereby enhanced. That one word had done it. Satire! Here it was in good measure. So he deprecatingly took his manuscript back again, indeed with the concurrence of his publishers, who agreed that the new plan might be to their common interest, and ran round at once to the best of magazines. The editor was there, and was visible to an author of such distinguished reputation, and he professed himself charmed to have a chance at the new work. He'd read it at once. He'd read it aloud that night, to his wife, and, unless Templeton heard from him to the contrary, he might drop in to-morrow afternoon. Templeton went home feeling, as he told himself jauntily, rather spiffy. Even if the boom in Templetons hadn't lasted, which nobody could have expected, evidently there was enough back-wash or something or other to float him on to a little extra cash.

The next afternoon he did not go in town. He thought he would give his editorial arbiter time to turn round and adjust his critical opinions at greater leisure. And when he did go, he found a different sort of man. The editorial phiz had settled into its mask of worried remonstrance, the look that always said: "Now see here! this won't do, you know. Expect me to take this thing, do you? I can't, dear fellow, I

really can't and that's the truth. But you want me to find reasons, now don't you, reasons that won't cut you up like the devil and all? Well, here goes."

Templeton knew that expression of face. He knew the hand that snatched up the paper knife to tap the desk at moments of emphasis and worry, he knew the natural human impulse to take refuge with a protective soul that caused the editor to call in Maisie McGuire and seat her at the little desk near by, to look over some notes for letters, but really to enable the suffering autocrat to assure himself that he had, in his discomfort, at least one friend. For this was Dear Old Templeton, and he'd got to hurt him and he didn't want to. Old Templeton knew that, the minute he got inside, and he put out his hand for the manuscript lying there on the desk, with that look of finality about it manuscripts have a way of wearing when they are going hopelessly home. They even say to the author of their being: "Of course nobody wants me. I could have told you that. Look at me in the naked futility of your not first-class typewriting. If I could have slipped into print, now, by some crooked work or other on somebody's part, I might strike 'em as no worse than the rest of 'em. As it is—good night!"

"No, no," said the editor, also putting his hand on the manuscript, as if he had to prevent it from being up and away. "Not yet, that is. We've got to talk it over. You won't agree with me, of course. I dare say you won't really understand. My dear fellow, it's awfully clever."

"Really?" said Templeton ironically. He raised his eyebrows. He wished it were as easy to raise his hopes.

"Yes, it is. It's simply wonderful. It proves you've caught the modern spirit, exactly. How the deuce you could do it, feeling as you do, I don't know."

"Oh, come!" said Templeton. "Come to Hecuba. What's the matter with it?"

The editor visibly squirmed in his chair. Editors have a frightful time of it. Nobody is ever half sorry enough for them. This one even threw an imploring glance across to Maisie McGuire; but she bent her glossy waved head lower over her work, and inwardly he cursed her. She knew perfectly well what he wanted, and he didn't see any more than she how she could help him; but she might at least have looked up. He writhed again and tapped with the paper knife, savagely. Then he spoke, in a voice roughened to actual fierceness by his feeling for Dear Old Templeton.

"You see," he said, "it's unfortunate, of course. Everybody'd know it at once. Why, it's isn't merely that it suggests your brother's play. It's as like it as two peas. It might be the play itself novelized. You know that, of course. You probably intended it for that. But it won't do, Templeton. Everybody's seen the play, everybody——"

Templeton had been staring at him fixedly. He hoped there was no expression whatever on his face. He was trying to dull it out to a merely human mask; but the mask seemed to him like that of a clown in the circus, grotesque and probably, to coarser minds, funny exceedingly. Something seemed to be demanded of him, and he spoke.

"No," he said quietly. "Everybody hasn't seen the play. I haven't."

Now the editor stared, and Maisie McGuire glanced quickly up.

"You haven't?" he repeated. "You've read it, then."

"No," said Templeton. "I haven't read it."

"Well!" said the editor, compressing into one explosive word his perplexity over the coil of magazine events. "Of course that accounts for it. But I'd like to know," he ended, so uncomfortably that he sounded quarrelsome, "I'd like to know why you haven't."

"Ah," said Templeton pleasantly, "that might be a question. But I haven't, I give you my word."

He put out his hand and drew the manuscript toward him. Since it had not been wrapped, he got a sudden idea that the editor, with Maisie's silent support, meant to go over it with him, point by point. But now Maisie spoke. She looked at him quickly, and he was touched at something indignantly sorrowful in her large eyes.

"It's awfully funny, Mr. Templeton," she said impulsively. "The play, I mean. It's a perfect scream all through."

It seemed as if she were impetuously bent on assuring him that if he had stolen a model, the steal was a clever one. The model was irreproachable. He had chosen well.

"Yes," said the editor, still angrily. "It's the best up-to-date comedy I've seen for years."

"Got a string?" enquired Templeton. "No, I don't need to have it wrapped. I can just drop it in my bag."

But a myrmidon was summoned to do it up in proper form, and at last he had it in his bag and rose to go. Of course the editor, mindful of their long relation and, on his side, at least, a professional affection, was again moved to an irritable disclaimer.

"Look here, Templeton! There's nothing offensive in this, is there? What I said, you know. Whatever way you're taking it——"

There he blundered to a halt, and Templeton answered him with a directness calculated to put any man at ease.

"My dear fellow, don't think of it. I don't dispute it for a minute. I've stolen my brother's plot. Guilty! Now what more can I say? One thing—you're a cracker-jack of an editor. Glad it's you that spotted it and not one or two other fellows I could name."

"But why the dickens!" broke forth the editor. "If you have seen your brother's play—I know you haven't! yes, yes, I know. You told me so. Well, I want to know why in thunder you didn't, when it was played here for a year under your nose? No, I take that back. I don't mean I want to know."

"I've had illness in the family," said Templeton gravely. "I haven't been thinking very much about plays."

"Of course not!" said the editor penitently. "But you can't now," he continued intemperately as if, having one foot in, he must thrust the other after it. "It's on the road, you know. Of course you know it. Good God!"

But Templeton was gone. He closed the door behind him with a care he felt to be significant. Of what?

that he should never go there again, or because it was a comfort to distract his attention momentarily by doing something with exactness, as if it might be a stage direction? He thought he would not take the elevator, and as he went along the corridor to the stairs, somebody came, in a light rush, and seized the hand hanging by his side. He looked down at her: Maisie McGuire. She was all a quivering sympathy.

"Don't you do it, Mr. Templeton," she said. "Don't you ever see his play. It's just what I told you. It's funny—as frogs—but it's vulgar to the last word, and I bet you knew it and that's why you wouldn't go. And as for your pinching it—my heavenly Father!" Maisie used to have a country aunt who referred thus to her Creator, in moments of dramatic tension, and Maisie said she herself had to do it and that it was the only instance of atavism she knew. "I'd be ready to bet," she averred, not meaning it but beginning to when she caught the reaction of his face, "I'll bet he read your novel and swiped it for his play. Don't tell me!"

Templeton smiled at her and held the sympathetic hand in a firm grip.

"You're a nice girl," he said, "almost as nice as my Sally. No, he never saw my novel. It's only been done a month. And I'm guilty. They are alike, the play and the novel, I haven't the least doubt in the world. It's something psychological, you see. It would take a Freud to dope it out. But I'm guilty. O yes, I'm guilty, only I can't see just how."

Maisie, like him, had also a far back Irish ancestor, and she threw at him: "Aw, go away wid ye!" snatched

his hand to her lips and went tap-tapping her running heels back along the corridor.

Templeton had tears in his eyes. Girls weren't much changed, he thought, by their rouge and lip-sticks. They were still, the best of them, good motherly stuff.

XLIII

When he got home that afternoon, he was tired. Sally sat on the honeysuckle porch and, as he went up the steps, he thought she was at least a little what he called down-looking. But she gave him a nice look, as if there were nothing on her mind, and it suddenly came over him that she was doing his old job, and Elizabeth's. She was running the house, and if the procession of handmaids that once induced in him a nervous panic still trickled through the kitchen, with intervals when the presiding genius had to concern herself with the omelette of emergency and the dish-cloth of unwilling service, he never knew it. And Sally liked that kind of administration no better than he. She put out her hand perfunctorily, to take his bag, but he guided it for her and set it on the table.

"Heavens!" said she. "But that's heavy. Books?"

"No," said Templeton. "Only two. The other's a manuscript that meant to be a book. 'One that was a woman, but, rest her soul, she's dead.'"

Sally looked at him keenly. Each of them was thinking how tired the other was and reaching out for a remedy, while concealing the suspicion of a need for it.

"Something you've got to edit?" pursued Sally absently, her mind on his tired look.

"No," said Templeton, beginning to feel momentarily rested now he could romance a little. "It's no good. The author's convinced of that. He gave it to me to burn."

"How extraordinary! Had you convinced him?"

"Oh, no! he found it out himself. The fact is, it's going to look like a plagiarism. He didn't know it, but it is."

"But why doesn't he destroy it himself? What's he making you tug it way out here for?"

"Oh, he's a sensitive fellow," said Templeton, finding there was more amelioration in the case than he had suspected. "Beautiful nature, the chap has. Regular sensitive plant. I never saw the like."

To Sally, there was something rather fishy about this, something suspicious in the innocence of his tone. She knew that innocence, though she could not always place it. Merely, she concluded, as she often had to, there was more in it than met the eye.

"Father," said she, at a venture, not really knowing why she said it at that moment, "do you get any time to write? not your hack-work, but your real stuff."

"Oceans," said Templeton, not caring whether it was a lie or not. "Simply oceans of time. I'm not publishing anything just now, but I conclude it's better to be a little slow. Don't rush into print, you know, but work over a thing till you've got it right. Give your days and nights to the study of Addison! they used to say something to that effect some fifty years ago, I believe. I don't know exactly what they recommend now, but, whatever it is, I shall give plenty of days and nights to it before I break violently into

print again. Sally, did you, by any chance, see And They All Came Back? Pat's play, you know."

"Oh, yes," said Sally morosely, "I know it's Pat's play. Yes, I saw it the first week."

"Why the dickens didn't you tell me?"

"I meant to, if I found you were going; but when I asked you, you said, no. I was going to warn you off. Nothing doing, darling, not for you, in Uncle Patrick's play."

"Clever!" suggested Templeton.

"Yes," said Sally gravely. "Clever because it hit nine out of ten of them where they live. The notices said that. Didn't you read the notices?"

Templeton shook his head.

"Well, they were pretty unanimous. One of them, that man you say knows——"

"Goodwood?"

"Yes. He said it was cheap as dirt but it made you laugh in spite of yourself, and it was bad right through, because it began by convincing you you'd never be happy with the world as it is, and then it turned right round and convinced you all over that the world as it is is all right, and couldn't be better. You might give up the flesh pots when you had an indigestion, but you'd come back to 'em and be mighty glad you had 'em to come to. That's what Lent does for you. Swear off and begin again. Of course it wasn't quite so rotten as that, but that's what it amounted to. I'll get it for you."

"No, no," said Templeton. "I don't want to see it. Weren't you a sly one to slip off to it alone?"

"I wasn't alone. Champ took me. I asked him to."

"How'd he like it?"

"Hated it. He said it made him want to tuck me under his arm and run off to live in the woods."

Templeton thought he could venture this:

"Sally, is he going to take you under his arm?"

She gave him one of her clear, unembarrassed looks.

"I don't half believe he'd better," said she. "It would be awfully complicated, and I feel exactly as I did. I'm the best he's got, but I dare say I'm not the best there is. You see, Champ and I are like two fellows. We're men-folks, father. We have a wonderful time together, the best ever—but, love!"

And yet her face looked to him very much like what he thought love used to be.

"You mustn't get too rarefied," he said. "After all, old girl, it's almost as cowardly for you to be afraid to let Champ venture it as if you were afraid for yourself. Throw your bonnet over the windmill. You're always talking about being a man. *Be* a man."

"Champ's being a man all right," said Sally. "We went up on the boulder last night and talked and talked."

Did Templeton feel the slightest pang of jealousy? He had assumed the boulder to be Sally's and his. But she had evidently no idea of having infringed on property rights, for she went on composedly:

"He's going to build his theatre. They'll break ground in July. Mrs. Hilliard has sold them the farm. They wanted it for that grove of pines."

"She has?" cried Templeton. "Elizabeth? what does she say?"

"Elizabeth'll go on teaching, same as she has been. I

went over to see her this morning. She was packing up. She looks—well, I don't know just how she looks. Her mother's all dulled out. You know how bright her eyes were? Queer eyes! but they're not queer now. They always seemed to be asking for something. Maybe she's got it. No, no, she hasn't. They don't look like that."

"Poor devil!" said Templeton, but he could not explain and Sally evidently thought he meant merely the general poverty of the human animal in the face of its hungers and desolations. Her mind was dreaming on about Champ. Now she did not look so worn. Her eyes were musing, like a mother's looking for far-off things.

"Champ says he's been awfully sulky," she said frankly. "He still thinks it was the wrench of coming home and find the world entirely different from what they thought it would be—he and the other boys. He says the rest of them knew how to take it. He didn't. He was a poor gullible fool. That's the way he puts it, not I."

"How do you put it, Sally?" asked her father. "I've an idea you keep studying us all day long, in your dear little mind."

"Well," said Sally, "the way I put it is this. Champ was just a boy when he went over. Then in the army everything was formulated, everybody was thinking the same thing—or they knew they ought to be if they weren't. And some of them felt they were doing the biggest thing in the world, throwing into it the best they had. And they were, weren't they? It was an immense brotherhood. Everybody upheld everybody

else. And when they came home, they thought it would be just the same. But it wasn't. Everything went phut! as the books say. And Champ had thought he was going to write the most beautiful poetry—he'd *felt* poetry all along, you see—and when he got it down it didn't look any better than anything else. He knew the old work too well. It didn't measure up. And there he was, with nothing but his disgusting money."

"Don't say disgusting money," besought Templeton. "The Gods may hear you, and take away the thirty-seven cents you've got in your pocket. When it comes to money, I'm ready to grovel for it. Sally, money's a god. Propitiate it, bring it offerings of bullocks, sheep and goats. Think of your mother lying up there. Think of you, my darling, your youth going because you work and plan. Sally, if I can't get money for you two women, what on God's earth shall I do? I'd do anything, I believe, if I could find out what. I'd sell myself for a slave."

She broke in on him, flaming with love and wrath.

"You have," she said. "Don't you think I know it? You have sold yourself for a slave."

It was not like her to speak with such passion. He was frightened for her, his calm Sally. He thought he had concealed his inner mind from her, these two years, as he had from Amy. He must be craftier. He must begin again.

"Don't you worry, old girl," he said. "I'm all right. The only thing I can't quite bear is mother. And you, there's always you. I want to see you dancing off somewhere with Champ. I could take care of mother. I could manage the kitchen, too. I don't believe I

should hate it any more, now I've seen the world really is 'full of a number of things.' Come on! run away with Champ. I'll back you up."

She smiled at him steadfastly. She looked almost merry now, and like the old Sally—the younger one he'd known.

"I could tell you the funniest thing of all," she said. "I didn't mean to, it seemed so devilish. What do you s'pose Pat's done?"

"I know several things he's done," said Templeton drily. "What now?"

Sally laughed, and he felt he should be able to laugh, too, with a free mind, if she could look like that.

"Of course," said she "—be prepared now—of course he's made a lot of money, the films and all. Well, he's bought a castle in Wales. A castle! Pat! Can you beat it?"

They sat looking each other in the eyes for a minute or two, and then they began to laugh.

"And the joke of it is," said Sally when they had laughed their discomforts out and felt clearer in the mind, "Champ saw exactly how it all was. He saw that rotten play was Pat's version of something you tried to give him—Champ. Don't you remember? And he says, somehow or other Pat got it out of you."

"What are they doing out there?" said Templeton. He was glad enough to accept the pretext offered him by two figures in the road in front of the house. "Is that Old Stephen? who is it with him? They've been standing there for the last ten minutes, and the other fellow's been gesticulating and drawing arcs of circles on the horizon. See that arm! What does he mean?"

"It's the architect," said Sally, "they've got staying there planning Champ's theatre and things. He likes your house, don't you think? He's explaining it to Mr. Calvert, and telling him it's a pure example of early Georgian. There! he's going and Mr. Calvert's coming in. I'll run."

She threw a kiss at Old Stephen, which he gallantly returned; then she went into the house, and Old Stephen came on.

XLIV

Templeton was glad Stephen had been moved to come. It deferred his thinking about the poor moribund manuscript in his bag, which had not even a minute's grace given it, a perfunctory license to stay longer on this earth, because it had the worst disease known to honorable literature: it was a plagiarism. He had stolen his brother's plot. Something was hurt in him, something more than the pang of relinquishing the money it might have brought in. This was an irony, but though you could smile at ironies, they did hurt, if they too immediately concerned you. They might not make a wound; but they at least ate out one of the little holes in you that begin the dry rot of things suffered because they cannot be fought down. They are too insidious. They are of a character you could not have suspected in a world kept clean by the sun.

But Old Stephen was coming up the path. He mounted the steps and dropped into the chair Sally had left him, and began at once, with no preliminary greeting.

"That was that nice fellow, Riddle," he said, "Champ's architect. We've been looking at your house."

"Like it?" asked Templeton idly.

He liked it himself, more and more. It made little

difference whether a full-fledged architect did or not.

"Loves it," said Stephen. "Templeton, I set everything by your house."

Templeton turned on him a warm, though somewhat surprised smile.

"Thanks, thanks very much," said he. "I do, too."

"It looks nice," pursued Old Stephen. "Looks just what it is, warm, you know, comfortable, a regular home. And that's what I always feel when I get inside it. No matter what's happened to you, whether you're in trouble or whether you ain't, your house feels like a home. I don't know how you manage it, whether it's you or whether it's Sally; but somehow or another you've made me discontented with that great barracks of mine over there. Templeton, I want to come and live with you."

Now Templeton was indeed surprised, almost knocked off the base of his composure.

"But, Mr. Calvert," he said, "your home isn't a barracks. It's a wonderful house, beautiful, you know, in the best possible way."

"I can't help it," said Stephen obstinately. He set his tight mouth, and Templeton remembered hearing that, in two of the strikes he had overridden to commercial tranquillity, that mouth had been commented on by the press. It had become such a line of defense that Stephen might be said to have no mouth at all, only the preliminary mark to show where it was intended to be. "That house is as big as a freight shed, and only Champ and me to go wandering round in it. He doesn't mind. He likes it. But it'll kill me.

I tell you plainly, Templeton, it will. But even if Champ does like it, he'd admire to come over here and live and be near Sally. Templeton, is Sally going to marry Champ?"

"Search me," said Templeton flippantly.

"If she's laying anything up against him," said Stephen, in his perplexity frowning his eyes almost out of sight, "and it's that girl he got slung round his neck, you tell her—you know about the girl, what she's done now?" he enquired hopefully.

Templeton shook his head. The girl, who had been the agent of the god Chance, was the last thing he wanted to hear about.

"Run away," said Stephen, with relish. "Married. Might have been married at home just by saying so, her mother told me—she telephoned—but thought she'd do it that way. Friend—sort of a friend—of Champ's. Anyhow, he knew him. Fletcher, Bobby they call him."

"Yes," said Templeton, "she'd want to do it that way. And her mother wanted Champ to be told? She must have felt kindly toward him, at least."

"I don't know," said Stephen testily. "Maybe she wanted to wipe us both off the slate and done with us. We were kind of mortifying to her, I should think. But you tell Sally."

"Shall I tell her you and Champ are coming over here to stay a spell?" asked Templeton, thinking it a naïve sort of joke he ought at least to take with a semblance of cordiality, before passing it by.

"Yes," said Stephen simply. "To live, you know. Coming for good. That's what I brought the architect

over for. I wanted him to see whether he could put an addition on your house for Champ and me, without spoiling the whole business. He says he could. Templeton, you'd let me do that, wouldn't you, put an addition on for Champ and me?"

Templeton had never heard anything quite like that. Here was his dear shabby house and he and Sally, by hook and by crook, keeping the life in it from day to day, and Midas wanted to shake the gold dust from his shoes and creep in to curl up like a contented old dog for the twilight hour. He still thought he had better take it as humorously as might be, because, unless he laughed it might be he should cry, and the tears would not be altogether because it moved him so to find this fraternal yearning in a man who was no kin of his, while his true brother had seemed to be less than kind. They would, as tears so often do, spring from a hidden cause: the poor luck of his miserable story lying there in the bag and the ill fate which Pat had brought upon it. But after all, he need neither laugh nor cry. He could keep his serviceable guise of being a somewhat literal middle-aged man who was chary of complaint.

"But, Mr. Calvert," he said, "you're used to a very different sort of life from ours. Why, man! we live from hand to mouth. We're in mortal terror, every minute, Sally and I, for fear the nurses'll say they don't get enough to eat or the mattresses want doing over. And you! why, you've got the modern equivalent of marble halls, don't you know you have? Vassals and serfs at your side! and, what's most important of all, Ormond to lick 'em into shape and keep 'em there."

"Ormond's all right," said Old Stephen. "I've figured it all out, and he could come into it, keep things going for you, you know, if it takes it out of Sally, and keep the barracks going, too. Champ wouldn't want to give that up. He could have it just to wander round in, and entertain folks when he's got his theatre done and brings down actors and things to play his plays. Sally'd like it, too. She could be here just as much with her mother. Templeton, I don't think it's a square deal for me to have all this money coming in on me and not a place on God's earth to go to and be at home."

Now Templeton did feel the tears in his eyes.

"It's a queer thing," he said, "money. It's queerer than anything else. Capricious jade! and you knew how to propitiate her."

He wanted to lead the talk away from Stephen's request, his dream, Templeton called it in his mind. It was a thing that ought to work in the kingdom of heaven which is the reconstruction of earth that used to seem to him feasible. But now he saw too plainly how contrary the winds are in mortal affairs, and how they shift, with no warning, and blow all sorts of cluttering débris over the castles of the credulous mind, until the doors are sealed up by rubbish and the windows darkened against even the sunrise of a dream. And as it is with the mind trained to creative uses, the very act of this surface talk brought about a fresh impulse within. He had been unconsciously challenging it to tell him how to make some money of his own, and quickly, quickly, before he came anywhere near the end of his diminishing store. And as he

thought he was merely thinking gratefully of Old Stephen and his lonely magnificence, the answer came. Stephen was getting out of his chair. He was a little stiffer, not with every week but perhaps every month, and it made him hate old age. He paid no attention to Templeton's last remark, estimating it very fairly as a commonplace to fill up the conversational chink in a talk inevitably embarrassing, merely because it had to do with that disturber of the peace which is money. Besides, he had nothing to say about his own methods of conjuring in the means of living in marble halls. There had once been an exhilaration about it, when Fortune had shown some fascination of fickleness and he had to keep a nervous grip on her flying skirt. But that was long past; now he was so insignificant to her that she would not even take the trouble of playing a fictitious game. Let him squirm under the weight of the largess she allowed his shops to pour in on him and suffocate at last!

"Well," said he, "you think about it. I've tried to talk it over with Champ, but he says you wouldn't any of you take us in unless we hadn't a roof over our heads, and sometimes, he says, he wishes we hadn't. I do, too, Templeton. I wish it was forty years back—no, no, not that, for then I shouldn't have Champ—well! well!"

Grumbling at himself and Time, in his Tithonus way, he went off down the path, but did not forget to turn at the spot where he could look back and see Sally waiting, as she so often was, at her mother's window, to wave her good-bye. Templeton sat a little longer, trying not to think of the things he meant

never to think of, because they were disorderly and made him unhappy, and then went upstairs to read poetry to Amy. But while he read, the useful little imp of his mind which had been busy thinking up something for him to do to feed his family and keep his dear house going, had told him that he was to write the Sophia Colfax Cook Book.

XLV

It might as well be said, at this point, that the Sophia Colfax Cook Book, issued the following spring, was the success due a daringly eccentric work such as nobody had ventured before. First, it was a frank steal. Templeton compiled it at the big table in the chamber where Pat had written his play, possibly with some hope that a few of the merry imps attendant on that work still lingered about the walls and would find some fun in helping him to culinary larceny. Cook books of all ages and previous conditions of servitude were piled round him and, with the practised hand of the literary hack, he made cunning excerpts here and there, and so presented his plunder, so boldly and in such a naïvely clever way that nobody has ever suspected that the homely erudition of the volume was not his. Indeed, I suppose no one was ever more universally believed in by housewives and professional cooks than Sophia Colfax. It would be heresy to doubt her, and perhaps it is a species of disloyalty even now to give her away. And the book deserves its reputation: for it is not only piquing in its originality, alone among cook books it has a literary style. You cannot read it without carrying away a clear cut impression of Sophia Colfax. She is at your elbow, inspiring, helpful and, above all, humorous. She touches on dinner conversation, tells you how to cram for the

exigencies of table talk, and recounts stories and bon mots, credited to the unpublished ana of raconteurs, but of which the most accomplished colyumists had never heard because they had their origin in the brain of Templeton. In the section entitled Receipts of Ye Olden Tyme, she tenderly deals out to you concoctions only living up to that moment in the pages of novels no longer taken from the shelves. You saw in those pages, groaning boards garnished with delights nobody now, in the day of predigested food and talk of calories, has the nerve and muscle to undertake; and the receipts were all in terms of a time when you did not pour an extract from a bottle. You went back to raw products. You made your own yeast, you seeded raisins, you beat the whites of eggs with a fork. You prepared for a painstaking ordeal of bean porridge by removing the corn hulls with lye made of ashes from the non-existent kitchen stove. Sally, running through his manuscript, chaffed him roundly from the authority of domestic lore acquired painfully, from day to day.

"They never'll do all that," she adjured him. "Your sponge cake, now! Do you think any woman—if there are any women left to cook in their own kitchens—do you think they're going to spend a whole forenoon whipping eggs with a fork and putting in lemon drop by drop? And as for a cook, a real cook you go out into the wilds of the intelligence offices and gather by hand, you *know* she wouldn't do it."

"Of course not, honey," said Templeton, smiling at her as he lay back in his chair looking as if he admired himself and his cook book. "Nobody'll do it. But

everybody'll love to read it and think back to the dark ages, just as all the plutocrats are buying hard antique chairs. You don't suppose they'll sit in 'em, so long as they can smuggle in two or three upholstered ones, to rest their bones?"

And he was right. Sophia Colfax sold, and he fed on her earnings for many days. Sally told him that perhaps the only way to make her sell better was to write Pat about her and ask him to give a Sophia Colfax luncheon to the London literati. But at Pat's name he grew grave, and she saw it had, for some reason she could not ask, no longer any place in their foolish gibes.

But we have to go back to the day when the Cook Book was conceived, and this was the day of Templeton's seeing Elizabeth. He had thought of her, from time to time, with a vague anxiety, and because something had hurt him this day his nature was quickened to remember her who had been hurt, and he set off across the fields to see her. He forgot she had warned him not to listen to her mother, who might suspect him of impossible things, and remembered only that she was in a revolt of mind against her life as she found it, and he felt it would be calming to him, for the moment, to find out whether she, too, were more calm. He was not allowed to tap at the door. She saw him and came down the path to meet him, gravely beautiful and, as he had time to see before he spoke to her, with a mature dignity. She had her eyes on him and was smiling slightly, and he thought again, as he had the last time he saw her, how kind she was, how friendly, and how sad.

"Did you want something, sir?" she asked, an astonishing question of a man who was not treating her as "help" but was coming to call.

"Sally said you were at home," said he. "And I knew you'd sold your place. So I thought you'd be going soon and I'd come over and ask how things were."

She had given him her hand in a quite unembarrassed way, and now she turned a little as if expecting him to go on and, with a finality he could not escape, seeing him off the place.

"Mother's picking over old things up attic," she said. "I'll walk a step with you."

They went down the path and turned into the back road where he had found Eunice walking with Blaisdell, the night that seemed so long ago. Elizabeth spoke hurriedly, as if she had to compress everything into the few minutes she felt she was to have with him.

"I don't know," she said, "whether you've heard what we're going to do. Mother's taken part of a house in the village, and Enoch's going to live with his sister and go out for day's works; she's a maiden lady and she's been wanting him for a long time. I'm going on with my teaching. I tried to get mother to live with me, but she wouldn't. She said she'd rather be among her own kind of folks. She didn't think she'd be contented with mine. I tried, Mr. Templeton, truly I tried; but she wouldn't come.

"Of course you tried," said he.

He was prepared to console, whatever she said: for it was his impression that nearly everybody in this wilfully disordered world needed to be consoled once they

had got to the point of having that wistful, baffled look in the eyes. But she was not content with friendly platitudes. This was the only moment she was likely to have for untrammeled confession and she craved it bitterly.

"I can't do it, Mr. Templeton," she said. "I can't make myself love people if I don't. Do you think I've got a New England complex? We came from there."

They were walking slowly on through the pleasant road, and Templeton stopped to look at her. It was with compassion, and his voice also was compassionate.

"My poor child," he said, "are you letting yourself be bedeviled by that kind of thing?"

"But there is one," she said. "And why shouldn't it be that that makes me so hard and—and immovable? I don't want to be, but, Mr. Templeton, I am hard, hard as a stone! Why don't you want me to call it a complex, if it is one?"

"Because," said Templeton, "there ain't no sich a person. That's only a new name for an old thing which is human nature. There's nothing in it, except that it'll make you feel as if the whole universe had put a comether on you and you were bound by a spell. Don't tie yourself up into knots, Elizabeth. Just live, and stop thinking about it."

"But what if there is more to it and there are things I can't stop thinking about," she said, in her tortured way, "things that haven't anything to do with mother? If she was right about me. If I loved some one, some one that would never look at me—is that an inferiority complex?"

In his mind Templeton was roundly cursing them all, with their complexes, their goings in and their comings out, at bed and board, by night and by day, a genuine, old-fashioned curse.

"If you're in love," said he, at a venture, "stay there, unless it's with somebody that isn't worth it. Is he?"

"Yes," said she, out of white lips. "Yes. He is worth everything—everything——"

"Then, if"—he paused here, because it seemed hard to find a way of saying it—"if it isn't going to be a happy thing, if you can't be together—"

"No," she said, in her frozen way.

"Then, child, keep it for a dream."

She gave him a quick look. He was so sane, to her eyes and mind, so untouched by the queer formulating fetters her anxious studies taught her to see as confining all men, and so warmly kind!

"Would it," she asked, "be right?"

"It might be unwise," he owned. "But really, you know, there's nothing that's much better than a dream. And if you get lonesome—it's a frightfully lonesome world, they tell me—you can always live in your dream. Do you know"—he felt moved to give her a concrete instance—"do you know, Sally, when she was little, used to have what we called an invisible playmate. When she was lonesome, she summoned the playmate and the playmate came. And I have an idea she has kept up her invisible relations ever since."

There he stopped because he saw, from her perplexed face, that it meant nothing to her. The fairies that bore gifts at Elizabeth's coming into this world

had not endowed her with imagination. They could not have done worse for her. She must follow her grey road without it.

"Well," he said, again consoling her, "when you're lonesome, you go and live in your dream."

She stopped here, and he turned about with her.

"Should you mind," she asked, "going back without me? I don't want mother to see me walking with—with anybody. It mixes her all up."

"Then it's good-bye," he said, "for now. Elizabeth!" He wanted to give her something. What could it be? Wasn't there something that was better than a moral platitude? Should it be what all woman were said to want, a tribute to her woman's charm? "There's one thing you don't want to forget. You are a very beautiful woman. You are sweet and kind and true. Say your prayers, child. Say, I'm beautiful, and sweet and kind and true. And ask Them to keep you so."

Elizabeth was crying, in a still way.

"What shall I pray to?" she asked breathlessly. "That's too familiar to say to—God. I don't go to church. I don't—Oh, I can't! I don't know how."

And then Templeton fell into that wandering way of his, where, she always felt, he was no longer to be understood.

"Why," he said, "there's but One to pray to. I don't know what you'd better call Him. Yes! call him the Lord of Life. That's a good name—Lord of Life!"

She gave him her hand again, and he walked back along the road and she stood looking after him. She did not entertain the old omen of watching a person out of sight, although it might mean you would never

see him again. She believed she should not see him again, at least in such an intimacy of speech.

Templeton went home, thinking, not of the puzzle of her unhappy mind, but of Sally. He went into the house and called her to him.

"What is it?" she asked, running down to him where he stood in the hall. "What's happened to you?"

"Sally," said he, "I got thinking. It was just something somebody put into my mind."

"Elizabeth!" she said, at once.

"Yes. I'd told her for God's sake to let her complexes and her inhibitions and all their infernal black magic alone, and get an invisible playmate. Sally, do you do that now? That nice crowd you used to play with, do you see much of 'em now?"

Her face was a study, more impenetrable than Elizabeth's: for she looked amused, in a shy way, and half as if she would not tell. But she did tell.

"Never!" she said. "I talk to Them—about mother, you know, about you, when I worry, dear. They hear me. I know They do, but They don't answer. You see, since I've been so much with Champ—" She paused.

"Well?" said Templeton.

"I suppose," said Sally, with some difficulty thinking it out, "I'm not lonesome any more. He's so near me, he—he blots things out."

XLVI

It was about this time that Champ began calling Sally Sillysally, pronounced as one word, with the accent on the first half. She affected to consider it Shillyshally, and answered to it pleasantly, until he told her that would do as well as another, for it was really his meaning, indicating her torpidity in marrying him. Then she affected to be deaf and did not answer at all, and upon that he wrote her a letter. It came by mail, in due course, although he had seen her the day before and might then have said anything in it, instead of sitting down to write. Also, if their usual programme was carried out, he would see her to-day. But the letter came, and this was it:

"Esteemed Miss Sillysally: Let me state in the beginning that this is a love-letter. You will readily see why I am reduced to the humiliation of dipping myself into ink like a suicidal fly and then crawling miserably all over the lot to make you understand why there is simply no other resource for me. If I talk to you I shall seem just the same kind of jackass I did the other night when we talked on the boulder, and if you found I was making a fool of myself and laughed at me it would serve me right, for people don't talk much about the things I am going to unless they are professional gas-bags—or unless they are in love. First and foremost, Miss Sillysally, I most politely and earn-

estly beseech you to marry me. I cannot possibly, day and night being as short as they are and ink coming by the bottle and not by the oceanful, present anywhere nearly all the reasons for your doing so. I will simply attempt to set forth the most obvious advantages of the proposition and lead you to conjure up the rest. The disadvantages you will readily discover for yourself but, I hope, not until after such lapse of time as will have enabled you to keep a few dozen marriage anniversaries with me (finding yourself still a being of light and loveliness while I have degenerated into a lean and slippered pantaloon), and therefore being sufficiently fagged by life in general and with me in particular to let well enough alone. Now, to take, but not *in extenso,* the negatives of the case. I do not ask you to marry me for my personal appearance. Whenever I have had occasion to examine it critically, either to pronounce upon a hair-cut or the pathological aspect of a black eye, I have been invariably ill-content. Doubtless you have noted it, the quick feminine mind being ever adapted to such cruelties, and, if I become outwardly your asset and liability, you will allow yourself to condone it. I do not mention my habit of poking fun at you. I have become well grounded in this. It is a custom I could ill break away from, and I can only beg you to take my own view of it as a species of love-making by inversion. And the reason for its being run in precisely this mold is the necessity of making love to you so constantly that it would cause you to become too conspicuous unless I disguised it under some form of ribald address. If I remark to you brutally: 'Sir, I object to the shape

of your nose,' or, 'I do not like the cut of your beard,' it bears you a disguised message, a composite of all the remarks of all poetic lovers from the seventeenth century down, relative to the rosy cheek and coral lip. But if it be overheard, it merely seems a particularly uncouth form of abuse, and so attracts to you the sympathy of the hearer, instead of instigating that mirth which defaces the fair image of love. (As to cheeks, while I am on the topic I venture to recall my encomiums of the dusky bloom of your former handmaid, Elizabeth. These I suspected of being slightly nettlesome to Your Highness, a result which led me, for the first time, humbly to hope that I might possess you, since such annoyance at the praise won by a sister woman has long been recognised as implying some slight semblance of jealous fear. And I do hereby confess that the dusky bloom to which I allude was vastly agreeable to me, as it had been a peach out of Eden, or as Eden's orchard might have been if the Lord of it had let loose in it some old-time forerunner of our cunning growers of fruit. But one day I walked with your Elizabeth for a space upon the road, and she interrogated me seriously on the subject of psychology and eke free verse, with some return to the past of Thomas Carlyle or Margaret Fuller, and when we parted I went sorrowfully on my way, never to regard her more.)

"Now as to the advantages I presume to offer you, I cannot, without undue arrogance, pretend to any in my own proper person. But as to the circumstances of my life, I can offer you a father-in-law not to be excelled. He is not of the same cut of goods as the

father-in-law I expect you, in exchange, to be so generous as to offer me; but I venture to warrant him of as intrinsic a quality, not of so picturesque a pattern but an excellent wearing material. Again, as to outward circumstance, I pray you, if you see in me none of my good parts which should tempt you to marriage, that you marry me for my money. I have an intimidating amount of it, rolling in on me through the unpicturesque efforts of your father-in-law to be, and you shall have the spending of all of it I don't put into theatres and terraced gardens and fairylands generally, and I beseech you, my own Sillysally (yes, I think you are my own) that you sit here as you read this letter and consider in cold blood how nice it would be for you to know you were giving my mother-in-law every luxury the earth has left for her without wearing my father-in-law to the bone striding back and forth from town with his green bag and frowning over how it is to be done. And if you won't do it for them, my own dear Sillysally (every time I write it I am surer you are mine) do it for me, so that I sha'n't see marks coming in your dear face where the crows will pretty soon be scratching round cawing out to you to work harder and wake longer at night planning quiet days for everybody but yourself. Do, my own dear Sally, (yes, I am sure you are infinitely dear) if you can't marry me for anything else, marry me for my money.

"And now I want to tell you a little, as much as I can manage, about me. Because I seem, or once seemed, to have a grouch, because I had an idea it was a picturesque sort of world and I find it isn't, I think you, in motherly darlingness (yes, you are my own dar-

ling Sillysally) regard me as a sort of Problem and seek about for athletic exercises for my mind and what you may call my soul, exactly as mothers do when they are bringing up their children and find some of them Imps of Satan and so go to the Psychoanalytical Shops and say: 'What have you in a bottle for Satan, his Imps?' But somehow, by dint of time and the silence of your father-in-law, and my father-in-law, and your own anxious heart and your sweet looks (that I adore, my own darling Sillysally) I have peered into the inside of myself and I found there my True Image. And it was the image of a Fool. For I hadn't seen life as it was, but as you might see it in the sunset clouds or a boat coming over the sea. And instead of helping finish a great job in the war and seeing the curtain come down on it as if it were a tremendous play and we were all going home to security and peace, I see now that the fight will last and that the earth will never be tranquil enough for us to sow it down to grains and grass and flowers, because the feet of men and women, of one sort or another will always be trampling the seeds to death or bruising the young shoots. For that is what the earth is. That is what men are. And there is no happiness except in a steadfast mind and a worship of—what is to be worshiped! And all men's hearts like mine are turned to the desire of happiness; but because we are ignorant of mind and poor of spirit, we do not know what happiness is, and we catch at the wrong things. And the movie says, It is not in me, and radio says, It is not in me, and the tin lizzie says, It is not in me. But what is it in? You know, Sally. Your

father knows. I'm beginning to know. But this I do know: first that life is the Dark Forest, and that it is never going to be laid out in gallant walks, because it grows up so fast after planting that we've got to hew our way forevermore. And it can't really be charted, and there can't even be enough signs on the trees. Always there are new turnings, and old mud-holes that come again after we get them filled up; and, in short, the fight wasn't on merely when we were in the trenches, but it is on forever here on this planet and forever man is a soldier, unless he is a deserter. And then we must shoot him at sunrise. And what all men desire is happiness and, not seeing how to get it, they want blindly to escape. And so I, in my desire to escape, am going to build my theatre and, like Kubla Khan, decree all sorts of stately pleasure domes, with my father's money. I am going to build things, and build them beautifully so that men come to them and say, 'This is beautiful.' Or the fools that are the deserters can come and wonder and say, 'What the devil!' but the image may have reached their brains and sometime, if it stays there, their children will want to build, too. And my father—your father-in-law, Sally—will keep on trying to take the curse away from women's bodies; but I shall just try to make beautiful things because that is what I've got to do. Do it with me, Sally, my darling one! Don't use up any more of our valuable time trying to understand me any better. Take a chance! I don't really know what's in me. There may be a quatrain of real poetry, if I don't think about it, but let it sit in the dark on its own egg. But whatever there is, it's yours. And if I seem

to chaff you or deride you or—O Sally, don't you know it's only because I'm such a mush about you I've got to put on some sort of side or I should be the biggest human spectacle on earth and the gods themselves would want a close-up of me? But I've said that already. And about the things to do—why, to be married is the only thing to do and then all the other things can be added unto us. Maybe I set out writing this letter because your father-in-law has just told me how he's been talking to my father-in-law and begging him to let him annex his house. (Never mind the pronouns. Sift 'em out and hook 'em on the right pegs.) Now I don't care a hang what our fathers-in-law want, so long as you want it, too. I'll live with you or you can live with me or you can live with me and spend all your time with your mother, or any blamed thing you like. Only marry me! It's so *silly* not to. Don't you see it is? Why, my darling child, you're as deep in trouble as you can be, seeing your mother lie there—— O Lord! I can't talk about it. For who brought it on her but me, with my splashing round in the Dark Forest, up to my neck and over! And there's another reason I can't talk about it. I can't let either of us think you're getting a rotten bargain, you that must have the best. Yet you must have forgiven me, for when I come over and get you and we run off into the woods, the minute we see each other we begin to laugh. Doesn't that mean anything to you? We laugh, Sally, we laugh. In spite of the whole mad world, we laugh. But if you can't—if you won't—if you're going to be a pig-headed Sillysally any longer, just don't write me so. Because, if you write it, I

couldn't bear to read it, and it'll only make me ache all over to think I've got to begin again. For you've got to do it in the end.

CHAMP.

"But if what I want isn't the thing to want? What if my staring the world out of countenance because I love it so—the trees, and the wan old moon, and the grass and the sea, all the whole rushing glory of the pageant of our dream—what if that isn't the thing at all for me to pin my life to? What if it's the hard, simple, hidden way of dark paths you and your father walk in, so quietly, Sally, almost nobody would know you were there? What if that's the glory and the dream? You'll tell me, Sally. Come and tell me, dear!"

When Sally got this letter, it was late afternoon and the long shadows were on the grass. It was quiet, being that time of day, and it was in all ways beautiful, being June. She took it out on the front steps to read because the length of it seemed to her to promise a great pleasure which she wanted to add to by reading it in the sun. And when she had read it, she sat for quite a long time with it lying under her hands and looking out into the green across the road. And then she read it again.

Templeton was upstairs, reading to Amy. It was the Rubaiyat to-day, as it frequently was, because that seemed to take them at an unhurried pace along a road as endless as the sadness and the irony of man. He had tried reading fiction to her, but it made her restless and the nurses looked serious over the chart. When

he read poetry, she seemed to settle into it with a placidity he could not feel to be pleasure, but accepted as the response to an anodyne which was, he thought, the best, save music, of all the palliatives known to earth. What was she thinking about while she lay there in her little boat of safety on a sea of comfort as placid as he could discover for her? Was she, in the old phrase, making her soul? Was she weaving about her this cocoon of acquiescence where she was to lie dormant, with the hope that sometime it would break: and then—wings? To-day, after he had read for a time, he glanced at her and, finding her breathing lightly, thought she had gone to sleep, and so, resting his book on his knee, gazed far off through the window, just as Sally was gazing from the steps downstairs. It was a moment of abstraction for him. He had very few of them nowadays, he was so busy with his task of emptying the green bag of varied things to be done and filling it up again with the completed product. Now, for some reason, perhaps on account of the June lights and shadows, he had a tenuous feeling of happiness, as if he were suspended in a shining world between what inevitably is and what the heart irrationally desires.

"John!" said Amy.

He looked down at her, and found her large eyes fixed on him. They held his solemnly; but that did not disturb him, for they were always solemn now, from their concentration.

"Shall I go on?" he asked, taking up the book again. As it often was with her now, she took no notice of his question, but saved her strength for the one she meant to put. It was this:

"Do you want to go abroad?"

He stared, frankly a little startled. When had he thought of going abroad? When had he wandered through those dim aisles of contemplation where he had planned to solace his uneasy soul? It seemed a long time ago. He could no more reconstruct that mood of homesick longing than he could rebuild the castles of his youth.

"No," he said, quite honestly. "Not in the least. All I want is to drop in here mornings and hear you've had a good night."

Her eyebrows came together a very little and gave her a look she had not had of late, of human worry and apprehension.

"You'll be tired," she said. "Tired, tired!"

This was hard for him to hear because her tone showed him how tired she was herself, to say it in just that way.

"Amy," he said, "you just listen. I'm not tired, and I tell you, on my honor as a poor newspaper hack, there's no place on earth where I want to be except right here with a book in my hand, reading to you. And I have a kind of feeling that there's a lot of time, enough to do all the things that would be nice to do. Make a tryst with me, old girl, somewhere, sometime, when we're young again, and we'll get a job of reporting and go from star to star. The Sidereal Press! There's enough to look forward to."

She was smiling faintly, and he was incredulous of his happiness in seeing it: for up to this moment she had not smiled at all, though he had often, in his wistful way of trying everything, brought his unconsidered follies to her to see if possibly, now she had time, she

might like to remember the world was incurably foolish, in spots. But now she seemed to be listening, and he listened, too. Sally was coming up the stairs, and she was talking quite unguardedly, through the hush that still lay over the house because of Amy. Nobody wanted it so, neither the nurses nor he nor Sally; but somehow Amy's own stillness overspread them, like the shade of a great tree, and when they came near her they, too, were still. Sally was not only talking, in quick little bursts, but Champ was answering her. Together the steps and the unrestrained voices were at Amy's chamber, and Templeton turned in his chair to look. He was amazed. Amy had not seen any visitors, and yet Sally was bringing Champ. They came in, Sally looking like a person quite new to them, with a brilliant kind of excitement in her face, and Champ very much himself, but with his head up in a way that seemed pride.

"We wanted to tell you when you were both together," said Sally.

They came up to the bedside and Templeton glanced, in a sudden uneasiness, at Amy. She was looking up at them composedly, as if she had expected them.

"Yes," she said. "I've been thinking about it a good deal. Thank you, Sally."

It sounded so humble that they stood there by the bedside a minute or two, to get hold of themselves and be bluff and a little gay about it, as they would all have wished to be, and then Champ stooped and kissed Amy's hand.